WENDELL, MASSACHUSETTS

Its Settlers and Citizenry,

1752-1900
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Its Settlers and Citizenry,
1752–1900

Pamela A. Richardson
and
Thomas E. Sawin (1810–1873)
For Peter Gallant, with love and appreciation
for his unwavering support and for his understanding
as I kept disappearing into the past.
“In imagination, I am fixed on a succession of earlier worlds which, if I could just get them stitched together, would somehow make coherent to me my own existence.”

Sudye Cauthen,
*Southern Comforts: Rooted in a Florida Place*
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I have undoubtedly left out some important names. If yours is one of them, please forgive me.
(Above) Modern map of the towns of Massachusetts. The towns colored pink constitute Franklin County; the red town is Wendell.

(Below) Section of 1844 Borden map of Franklin County; Wendell is more or less at the center. Map courtesy of Dave Allen (www.old-maps.com.)
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Not long after moving to Wendell in 1997, I developed a growing curiosity about the people who had come to this place before me. “This place” initially meant the property my husband and I purchased on Bear Mountain, but over time it grew to include the entire town. As the concept of “this place” expanded, so too did my curiosity; what had started out as idle interest soon blossomed into full-blown obsession. The fact that Wendell is one of the few towns in Massachusetts with no written history of its own served to whet my appetite further. A stroke of luck connected me with Dave Allen, a collector of old maps in nearby Greenfield, Massachusetts, who needed help cataloguing nineteenth-century home sites in Franklin County. I volunteered to do the Wendell part of the project and, using maps from 1858 and 1871, spent many happy hours traipsing through the woods looking for old cellar holes.

Sometime after my work with Dave was finished, he discovered a reference to some documents entitled “Materials for a History of Wendell” written between 1843 and 1863 by Wendell resident Thomas E. Sawin. Aware of my passion for uncovering Wendell’s past, Dave emailed me the information. Apparently, Sawin’s papers were received, after his death in 1873, by the American Antiquarian Society (AAS), the renowned research library of American history and culture founded in 1812 in Worcester, Massachusetts, and there they seem to have more or less languished up to the present time. Presumably, over so many decades, at least some people have seen and read these valuable historical papers, but no one has ever used them to put together a history of the town of Wendell.¹

I immediately made the first of what would be many trips to the AAS. As I waited at a long, dark table beneath the majestic glass dome of the Colonial Revival building for the archivist to find and deliver Sawin’s notes to me, I could barely contain my

¹ The exception to this, perhaps, was nineteenth-century novelist and historian Josiah G. Holland who had access to Sawin’s material while Sawin was alive. In his History of Western Massachusetts, Holland included a short history of Wendell.
excitement. It seemed to take forever for the young woman to emerge from behind the closed door. When she did, she deposited two small boxes on the counter, each box containing five slim notebooks. I chose to begin at the beginning with the first one, entitled “Topography; Introduction and Reminiscences.” Opening it, I found faded brown ink in an ill-formed and severely slanted scrawl crowding each page, the spacing between lines and paragraphs almost non-existent. The discovery of these historical notes suddenly presented more of a task than I had anticipated. Picking up my magnifying glass, I set about acquainting myself with Thomas Sawin’s script, style, and story of Wendell.

Seven hours later, eyes and back aching, I had skimmed through almost all the notebooks. I was both disappointed and elated. Some of Sawin’s pages were all but illegible, while others were filled with the flowery verbosity typical of a lot of nineteenth century writing. Yet I knew I’d hit pay dirt: pages and pages of maps showing houses, their original builders, and their occupants in the mid-1800s; several first-hand accounts of what happened when the Mormons came to town and how “Mormon Hollow Road” received its name; names of the earliest settlers; when and where the first roads were built; unusual deaths; a report of a spotted fever epidemic – and even a few scandalous stories! Most fascinating to me was the list Sawin compiled of Wendell’s mid-nineteenth century male residents. Next to each name, he noted the man’s religion, occupation, number of people in his household, and (incredibly) his own judgment of the man’s character. My research had given me a working familiarity with many of Wendell’s inhabitants at that time, so I was thrilled to be introduced to their personalities – no matter how biased the reporting. I knew, for example, that a blacksmith named Samuel French had lived one house down from today’s Senior Center and kept his shop across the street. Thomas fleshed out my picture of the man by describing him as an “iron-hearted and iron-fisted busybody” as well as a religious “skeptic.” Suddenly, Samuel French came alive for me in a way he could not have otherwise – and how pleased Thomas must have been with his clever play on the word “iron”!
In the ensuing months, Sawin’s notes supplied many missing pieces of the puzzle of Wendell’s past and enabled me to dig more deeply into life in early Wendell by providing names, dates, and house locations that I thought had been lost to time. While much remains unknown, it does not escape me that, as I sit down to organize my own pages of notes into some sort of written account, I am the exact age Thomas was when he died. Lest history repeat itself and my notes, too, go unpublished before my demise, I have promised myself to “get this done!” – insofar as such a work can ever be “done.” Thomas also acknowledged that his work was “unfinished.”

This book is above all a cooperative endeavor. Sawin and I share a deep curiosity about the evolution of our town and a passionate urge to record what transpired here. His attention to detail, his personal acquaintance with people now long dead, and his proximity in time to the stories of people and events he recounts complement my love of historical and genealogical research and my access to all sorts of databases provided by present-day technology. Together, he and I paint a fuller picture than either one of us could have done individually. The history of a place is a history of its people, and this principle guided both his and my methods. Sawin’s notes served as my primary resource, but I have supplemented his data with much additional information from many other sources in order to compile genealogies and stories, both factual and anecdotal, about men and women who once lived in Wendell. These are introduced into the narrative as chronologically as possible. Other events and constructs of historical interest, such as wars and churches, are sequentially interspersed among the biographies. I apologize for omissions; there simply was not space for everyone and everything. I also apologize for any departures from conventional form in my footnoting. This is not an academic work and my intention with footnotes was simply to provide a source for the information in the text.

Separated as I am by at least a century and a half from the people Thomas knew and wrote about, I take lightly his severe moral judgments, excusing these – and some racist remarks – as being representative of the mores of his time and place. As strange as it feels to put into words, I am aware of having developed a strong
affinity with “Tom” through the course of this project. It was his hope that his notes would be “wrought into something interesting to the popular reader by some future lover of rustic life, or...at least... appreciated by the antiquarian.” Half muse, half mentor, Thomas somehow managed to pass his mission on to me. For that, I am grateful and trust that with this publication he is, finally, gratified.

P.A.R.
Rockwell Hill Road on Wendell’s southern boundary once formed a short segment of the stagecoach route that ran from Greenfield, past Wendell’s Ballard Tavern, through Petersham, and on to Worcester. Today, although the road has been out of use for a very long time, the numerous cellar holes and remains of barn foundations in the hardwood forest that has grown up alongside it attest to the vitality of this neighborhood two hundred years ago. It was on this road that Thomas Sawin’s father, John Sawin II, a carriage maker from Cambridge, purchased seventy acres from Betsy Sweetser Gates, widow of Silas Gates. The land was part of her “widow’s thirds” or dower, the one-third share of a man’s property which colonial law granted to his wife after his death. There, in 1815, John Sawin II set about building a house for his growing family as well as a shop for the carriage business he hoped would thrive in the booming town of Wendell. His hope was well-founded. That year, for the first time since the earliest settlers arrived in 1752, the town’s population topped one thousand. Timbering was big business, sawmills had cropped up on the many streams all over town, and entrepreneurial opportunities to meet the needs of the growing citizenry were many. The possibility of prosperity, for a hard-working man, must have felt almost like a promise.

Carriage-making was an occupation that ran in the Sawin family. John’s father, John Sawin I, had apprenticed as a blacksmith and then partnered with chaise-maker Joshua Wyeth in Cambridge before establishing his own carriage-making business. His life, however, was cut short by consumption in 1786, when he was twenty-seven years old. Two years later, his widow, Hepsibah Hastings (who was remarried to Major Jonas Wyeth, Joshua Wyeth’s brother), died in childbirth, leaving her two children, Sarah and John Sawin II, orphans.

Having no parents, John Sawin II was raised by various relatives. In his mid-teens, he was sent to Cambridge to apprentice with his uncle Joshua Sawin, another carriage maker, at Jabez Kendall’s
shop. Jabez Kendall was a wheelwright with four daughters: Mary, Abigail, Sally, and Lydia. When John Sawin was twenty-two, he married Lydia. Later, Abigail and Sally also married Sawin men (John’s uncles), forever cementing the relationship between the Sawin and Kendall families. Although Mary, who went by “Polly,” a common nickname for Mary, was the only Kendall daughter to marry outside the Sawin family, she stayed within the extended clan by becoming the wife of Gad Wyeth, brother of Joshua Wyeth, in 1793. A few years later, when Polly and Gad moved from Cambridge to Wendell, her father, Jabez, bought sixty acres on the southwest corner of the intersection of what are now Jennison and Rush Roads. In 1799, Jabez hired Gad to build a large house there with the intention of retiring to it, but then he died suddenly, and Polly and Gad inherited the home.

John Sawin II and his wife, Lydia, were in Cambridge when their first three children were born: John III in 1807, Thomas E. in 1810, and Hepzibah Ann (“Hepsy”) in 1814. It is likely that Polly and Gad encouraged John II and Lydia to leave the city for the greener pastures of Wendell. The sisters would once again be close to each other, and John, from all accounts an industrious and ambitious man, would be afforded new opportunities as a self-employed businessman. So, in 1815, John and Lydia took up residence on the Rockwell Hill Road property, not much more than a stone’s throw from Gad and Polly’s house. Their fourth

The Wyeths mentioned here belonged to the same Wyeth family that, in 1917, produced the famous American artist, Andrew Wyeth. Andrew’s 4th-great-grandfather Noah Wyeth (b. 1742) was the brother of Susannah Wyeth who married Thomas Sawin’s 2nd-great-grandfather Daniel Sawin (b. 1727). Three of Daniel’s sons were carriage makers: John, Joseph, and Joshua.

An aside regarding Daniel Sawin, of too much interest to omit, was penned by Thomas Sawin: “Though always very timid and solicitous about fire, he at last perished by it; persisting in being the last to watch it, he was found in a dying condition before his own fireplace, by falling in a fit or in feebleness, at the age of 72, 1800.” — from Sawin’s Summary Notes (see footnote 3), 8.

2 Jabez Kendall purchased the property from his brother-in-law Daniel Fiske of New Salem. It comprised two-thirds of Lot #28 as laid out in the “Gentlemen’s Plan” by surveyor Captain Nathaniel Dwight, discussed in the next section.
child, Daniel, was born there that year, and he was followed by Andrew in 1818. Over the ensuing decades in Wendell, John – characterized by son Thomas as “steady in his work and habits” – built two shops and established a “lucrative [carriage-building] business” through “incessant toil.” Despite the hard work, the business aspect of his life seems to have been a source of joy for John Sawin. Sadness came, however, with the deaths of two of his children: Andrew, at age nine, “of premature decay” and Hepsy Ann, always frail and sickly, at age twenty-five, of consumption. Moreover, there is an indication in son Thomas’s writings that all was not well in his parents’ home. He tells us that his father “in 1848 was temporarily resident on the next farm,” and that, at some point, he “removed to his son’s [house] in consequence of very dreadful domestic calamities.” Finally, John converted one of his shops to a dwelling where he lived until his death, at the age of eighty-one, on September 25, 1865. Thomas’s depiction of his mother, Lydia Kendall Sawin, suggests a source of his father’s marital unhappiness:

She was, like her sisters, very frail, and has attained her present age, 79, through a thousand sufferings of pain and gloom; her thoughts were ever, from her early married life, given much to prayer, religious books and musings associated with her offspring and the strictest evangelical views.

And what became of the three boys born to this hard-working man and his frail, melancholic wife? Interestingly, John III and Daniel continued the family tradition of carriage-making, and both added carriage-painting in the form of transparencies, frescoes, and landscapes to their repertoire. (It is tempting to attribute their “preference for the art of painting,” as their brother Thomas described it, to some dominant artistic gene that traveled down through the generations of the Wyeth family). Thomas alone struck out in a different direction.

In 1828, at age eighteen, Thomas began a three-year apprenticeship with a printer in Amherst. From 1831 to 1841, he “itinerated” as a teacher, pupil, and printer and then worked for five years as a clerk for the Baptist Missionary Society in Boston. In

Thomas E. Sawin, Summary Notes Concerning John Sawin and His Posterity, (Athol Depot: Rufus Putnam, Printer, 1867), 24.
1846, at age thirty-six, he married Mary Hardy Goss, widow of Deacon John Hill, of Providence, Rhode Island, and began life as a farmer on his father’s land in Wendell. Unfortunately, Thomas’s writings are only lightly peppered with autobiographical information. After ten years of marriage, when he was in his mid-forties, he wrote this terse description of himself: “feeble, but careful” and “busy at home.”

Thomas indicates that his life, like his mother’s, was overshadowed by sickness. He tells us that he was “thrown out of his path every few years by hereditary disease and, finally, housed in a domestic hospital.” Whether that hereditary disease was mental or physical, Thomas doesn’t say. Either way, it must have taken its toll emotionally. We know, too, that his wife, Mary, suffered from depression, as evidenced by this bleak epitaph Thomas wrote for her tombstone:

Orphan of affection and grief
Adopted by Aunt and Grandsires,
Nurse of their hospital home,
Wife and widow those of Deacon John Hill,
Happy wife of gratitude.
In rural home of Thomas E. Sawin 18 years
Often prisoner of calamity and pain.
Exhile [sic] of Inherited Melancholy 15 years.4
Patient waiter on Decay and Death,
Lover of all who love Jesus.

The 1860 Wendell census describes Mary Sawin, age fifty, as “insane.” In the town’s death records, the cause of Mary’s death in 1870, no doubt supplied by Thomas, was given as “melancholy.” What this means, exactly, is unclear. She may have brought her life to an abrupt end, or she may have slowly withered away as a result of her affliction.

Despite the suffering, gloom, and emotional disturbances that punctuated both his childhood and his married life, it is evident from his published and unpublished writings that Thomas worked diligently and painstakingly when he could. His endeavors point

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4 Mary Hardy Goss Sawin was born in 1810. She married Thomas in 1846 and died in 1870. The years given in this epitaph do not tally with the facts; some overlapping of years is surmised.
again and again to his love of the written (and printed) word. He tells us that “in youth [he] committed to writing all the reminiscences he could gather from his father’s memory.” Later, upon the death of his sister, Hepsy, Thomas wrote a three-page poem in homage to her. Later still, he spent several decades collecting and assembling an extensive genealogical study of his paternal family, but due to “the author’s domestic calamities and his own subsequent sickness,” Thomas’s progress in this work was abbreviated. With much still left to do, but “desponding of ever being able to complete the work as proposed...for lack of health and material,” he finally published his unfinished *Summary Notes concerning John Sawin and his Posterity*, containing over 1300 names of Sawins in America, in 1866. During this same period, Thomas spent long hours drawing detailed maps of many parts of Wendell, reading church and town records, researching deeds and histories of early settlers, and conducting interviews with elderly Wendell residents. Clearly, these efforts were made with some intention of one day writing a history of Wendell, but Thomas must have had an intuition that he would never accomplish this. In January 1847, only one year into what became a twenty-year project, Thomas wrote a letter to the Worcester Historical Society, on file now with his notes at the AAS, asking if they would accept his papers to be preserved in their archives because, as he explained, the people of Wendell were “too poor, too few and too illiterate to ever pay for publication” of any history book that he might write. Receiving a positive response, Thomas continued, undeterred, in his mission to record Wendell’s past until ill health stopped him.

Thomas lost his father in 1865, his wife in 1870, and his mother in 1872. With those closest to him gone (he and Mary were childless), Thomas himself died of consumption (tuberculosis) on December 13, 1873, at age sixty-three. The following year, at the centennial celebration of the Wendell Congregational Church, Reverend Warren Beaman gave a brief history of Wendell in his

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5 Sawin wrote the bulk of his historical notes in 1843 and then added to them over the ensuing twenty years.

6 Whether Thomas’s papers went directly to the AAS, or first to the Worcester Historical Society and then to the AAS, is not known.
oration, which included this nod of appreciation to one of the Baptist Church’s most dedicated members:

*I cannot leave this notice of the Baptist church without expressing my conviction of the rare ability and worth of the man who for many years was its clerk and brought order out of the confusion in which he found the records; who penned about all the correspondence, and watched with deepest solicitude the unfavorable changes and wasting away of the church which he sincerely loved until his own energies failed. I mean Thomas E. Sawin.*

Thomas is buried in Wendell’s South Cemetery alongside his wife, his parents, and his beloved sister, Hepsy Ann. The resting place of his little brother Andrew is unknown.

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Captain Nathaniel Dwight II (1712–1784) of Belchertown was a farmer, tavern keeper, and county surveyor, prominent in both civic and religious affairs. Just as chaise-making ran in the Sawin family, surveying occupied several generations of the Dwight family: both Nathaniel’s father, Justice Nathaniel Dwight I, and his brother Timothy Dwight, President of Yale, were well-respected surveyors. Nathaniel Dwight II was hired in the 1750s to make a survey of the Shutesbury land grant—a large area whose northern half would later become Wendell. Although Shutesbury had been settled in 1735, it took almost two decades for settlers to venture into its more northern reaches. Thus, Captain Dwight was one of the first so-called Europeans to penetrate that wilderness. In his field notes from that time, he described the territory as “virgin forest.” Dwight made this survey, designated by him as a “Gentlemen’s Plan,” more or less concurrent with the coming of the first settlers, and the purpose of the survey must have been to promote further land investment and settlement.

In Sawin’s time, tradition had it that the area was first visited by people from Hadley and Sunderland (which, then, included Montague) “to make sugar from its maples and to seek for their stray cattle,” and he was careful to point out that these forays occurred “while yet the dread of the Indian was upon the white man”—suggesting the possibility of encounters with Native Americans. Based on the many oral histories he took from people whose parents had been among the early settlers, Sawin saw no evidence of there having been any Native settlements or even much Native presence in what would become Wendell at the time of settlement due to the diminishment of the Native American population by the French and Indian Wars. Prior to that era, however, he guesses that there had been a fair amount of Native traffic through the area. Here are Sawin’s thoughts:

9 Available at Hampshire County Registry of Deeds, Northampton, Massachusetts, Libro 10, Folio 630.
How far the aborigines had to do with this little piece of hunting ground, tradition even is almost silent. Though no tribe made it a residence, it is supposed they visited it from every direction for about it were many clans of the ten great tribes of the Moheakann..s [spelling hard to read; “Mobicans” is inferred]. Happily, before the pioneers planted themselves here, the wars with the Pequots and with King Philip had decided the fate of the wild men of the woods and struck them with trepidation. Their power was broken, their hearts had become like water [and they had either] submitted themselves to the white man or fled to concentrate themselves with the French in Canada. There is no tradition of any [Native Americans] being seen in Wendell, but a few stragglers were seen in New Salem after the settlement.

That said, there were certainly many signs of Native presence nearby. For example, Montague’s first settlers found an Indian path running east from the Deerfield River across the Millers River toward Athol, and many Indian relics were discovered on Dry Hill, just west of the modern Wendell-Montague line. Another source states that “persons interested in searching for early artifacts, such as arrowheads, find Millers River and its adjoining area a virtual mine,” revealing that Native Americans made much use of the river and its surrounds for fishing and hunting.

(Note: Since the first edition of this book archaeologist John Wilson of Conway, MA informed me of the existence of some Native American artifacts found in Wendell over a century ago and now stored at Harvard’s Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. These artifacts include stone axe heads, a stone pestle, a maul, an arrowhead, a broken stone pipe stem, and a decorated potsherd. Some were found at Stillman Putnam’s farm in Wendell Depot and some at Chester Clark’s farm on New Salem Road; see the 1871 map for these locations.)

Whether the “Indians” were visible or not, the white settlers’ fear of them was great. Passed-down memories of the Turner’s

Falls Massacre (1676), to which Sawin devoted several pages, the Mary Rowlandson attack in Lancaster (1676), and the Deerfield Massacre (1704) no doubt lingered. Also, settlers in Northfield, Deerfield, and other nearby towns had been – and continued to be – subjected to repeated Indian attacks throughout the extended period of the colonial wars (1675–1763). These are often referred to collectively as the French and Indian Wars, but individually these wars were mostly known by the names of England’s reigning monarch during each conflict except for King Philip’s War (1675–1678); King Philip was the name adopted by the Native American leader Metacomet. That war was followed by King William’s War (1688–1697), Queen Anne’s War (1702–1713), and King George’s War (1744–1748). Only the last of these colonial wars, whose duration (1754–1763) coincided with the early years of the settlement of Wendell, broke with this tradition of nomenclature and was called the French and Indian War.

In an interview, Wendell resident Ira Benjamin told Sawin that

The last Indians seen in Wendell or Montague were observed by Phillip Root in 1754 when there were few settlements [non-Native] in Wendell. He was after his cows on Bold [possibly “Bald”] Hill; as they started suddenly in fright, he looked about to see the cause and was himself greatly frightened by discerning seven or eight Indians coming down the sidehill and ran as for his life. They, same year, took a captive in Colrain or Charlemont, in both of which places some whites were killed. This captive heard the Indians say that they had been to Wickett Pond to make observation about the outsetters of Shutesbury.

Eunice Osgood Leach, daughter of Lieutenant Luke Osgood and granddaughter of first settler Aaron Osgood, remembered her father telling her that there was so much fear of Indians in his childhood – in the 1750s – that his father once carried him all the way to a friend’s house in New Salem, which was more thickly settled, presumably for temporary safe-keeping. One historian wrote that on June 11, 1755, “a fresh chapter of horror and fears, like that of the decade before, opened with a tale of
men captured and killed in the cornfields of Charlemont.” 12 And 1756, too, was “a terrible year...In all of these towns [in the Greenfield area], men worked their land under arms and at night slept in or near the fortified places...[and]the enemy made repeated raids, killing here and there.” 13

It wasn’t until the 1763 signing of the Treaty of Paris, whereby the French surrendered to the English all of their vast territory east of the Mississippi, that the Native peoples’ spirit and power were finally broken. Following Britain’s victory, according to Sawin,

tee ming and prosperous settlers [began] pushing in every direction, not staying to reduce every acre to culture, but wishing to possess large tracts for the inheritance of children and finding that land just redeemed from the trees was more productive than old fields planted themselves on cheap though remote and almost inaccessible hills...and Wendell, being in the central highlands between the Connecticut River and the eastern settlements, was one of the very last tracts in this part of Massachusetts to be possessed by the white man, as it had been one of the least frequented by the former races.

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12 Pressey, History of Montague, 92
13 Ibid., 93.
Sawin gives details regarding Wendell’s topography, but because the same facts are easily found online and in print, they are not repeated here. Suffice it to say that Wendell’s thirty-two square miles are hilly, forested, and layered with ledge; the Millers River forms the town’s northern boundary; and at least ten brooks and several ponds are scattered about the rugged landscape which reaches its highest point – 1,306 feet – on Orcutt Hill. (Bear Mountain stands at 1,274 feet.)

Sawin’s notes begin with a detailed assessment of the natural composition of the area, the highlights of which appear below. All quotes are from Sawin, and biographical information on many of the men he mentions are supplied later in this book.

- “Almost the entire surface of the town overlies that kind of rock called gneiss, but in the northeast part [of town] there is a short range of granite flanked on either side by mica slate. There is also on the farm called Nathan Haskell’s [#213 Locke Hill Road] one small bed of stealite or soap stone in the southwest.” Daniel Wilder told Sawin that in some part of Walkup Road (Wickett Pond Road) there was white clay which was often pressed into balls by the hands and used for chalk. Wilder said, “I judge it might be made into excellent chalk and possibly earthen ware, but how much of it may there be found, I am unable to say.” There were also a few very limited beds of clay.

- There were “no mineral waters of public fame,” but in a hill behind Joshua Clark’s house (northeast Wendell) there was a spring which he affirmed was precisely like “the white spring of Howe Hill” (Mount Mineral in north Shutsebury), popular for its supposed healing qualities. The ingredients of that water were soda, oxide of iron, and molybdenum. In some instances, the waters of wells became sulfurous, as happened in 1839 to the well belonging to Joseph Fiske. (He lived just east

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14 These measurements are taken from the Massachusetts Historical Commission Reconnaissance Survey Report: Wendell, 1982, 1.
of #75 Jennison Road and owned a cider mill on Rockwell Hill Road below the Sawin farm.)

- The vegetation of Wendell, at the time of Sawin’s writings, embraced “more than twenty-five species of forest trees, thirty-five of shrubbery, twenty of berries, thirty of grapes, one hundred twenty of other herbaceous plants besides ferns and mosses.”

- Regarding the native fauna, Sawin continued,

  only thirteen species yet linger about and most of these will probably always find sufficient safety to remain. Fifty-four species of birds still elude destruction and many of them even observation. Of fish, six or eight species are known [but not named]; the reptiles and insects are not numbered. The soil and climate are as various as the population... from the bogs of the slimy swamp to the loam of the cornfield with its fifty bushels to the acre.

It is astonishing that only a century after first settlement, a mere thirteen species of animals remained in the woods of Wendell. Sawin identified some of these as mouse, mole, squirrel, and woodchuck. Skunk and raccoon could still sometimes be seen, but mink and weasel, fox and beaver were all gone. Sawin relates a story told to him by his father about going hunting with Gad Wyeth near Lieutenant Luke Osgood’s sawmills at Bowen’s Pond, “not far from [where] a deer was killed the year before, the last of his race!”

Nathaniel Wilder, remembering the 1780s when he first came to Wendell, told Sawin that

  in those early times, the wild beast troubled us some. Bears were occasionally seen. One killed a sheep in the road and dragged it into the woods...and a child going for his cows in the pasture was dreadfully frightened by a bear crossing the road...Wolves were often heard to howl in the woods, but did little mischief...Wild cats were occasionally seen: one [went after] Mr. Fisk’s sheep and singling one out, headed it and killed it, eating from its breast what it wanted...the people seldom let their sheep out at night. Indeed, they did not dare to let their children run in the woods.
Wolves, which Sawin said “appeared occasionally down to at least 1830,” were customarily killed. Montague paid a $20 bounty on wolves in 1806, and Wendell paid a bounty on both “cats” and blackbirds well into the early 1800s.

- Sawin included in his notes the many species of trees and shrubs in Wendell as well as an inventory of all the herbaceous plants found on the Sawin farm alone. This list bears copying out, if only for the poetry of the plants’ common names: sweet flag, blue flag, bullrush, yellow water lily, nettle thistle, Canada thistle, Jacob’s ladder, wild wormwood, false pig weed, hayweed, plantain, wild bean, May weed, flax, snapdragon, wild senna, lobelia, New Jersey tea, chickweed, knotweed, celandine, smoke head, wintergreen, heal-all, colt’s foot, papoose root, wild sarsaparilla, burdock, yellow, dandelion, mullein, tansy, milkweed, Solomon’s seal, goldthread, motherwort, elecampane, horseradish, water cress, Indian turnip, skunk cabbage, mad dog skull cap, field sorrel, St. John’s wort, honeysuckle, ox-eyed daisy, buttercup, rabbit’s foot, virgin’s bower, sundew, violet, prince’s [sic] pine, sweet fern, penny royal, horse mint, peppermint, catmint, gill-go-by-the-ground, wild lupine, five finger, and adder’s tongue. To these Sawin added more species found in other parts of Wendell: agrimony (east of Locke’s Hill), groundnut, wild indigo, deadly nightshade, hazelnut, hound’s tongue, lady’s slipper, wild teasel, dyer’s cleavers, crawfoot geranium, foxglove, wild tobacco, horehound, ginseng, pokeweed, heart’s ease, buckthorn, false bog rush, arrowhead, fireweed, Indian mallow, bittersweet, shepherd’s purse, thyme, colt’s foot and hobble bark.

Sawin also listed the edible plants and herbs that had been introduced into the town. Chief among these, he said, were grains like rye, oats, corn, barley, wheat, buckwheat, broom corn, and flax; less common, but also important were potatoes, cabbages, French and English turnips, beets, carrots, parsnips, rutabaga, radish, lettuce, beans and peas of many varieties, summer savory, sweet hyssop, chamomile, coriander, tobacco, mustard, hops, artichoke, and sunflower (grown “for its seeds and beauty”).
Climate change being one of the central issues of our time, it is interesting to read reports of significant weather events and fluctuations that occurred in town two centuries ago. All of the statements in quotation marks below come from Sawin, except where otherwise noted.

1755: Nathaniel Wilder, referring to “the great earthquake of November 18, 1755,” said that “old Deacon [Jonathan] Osgood, father of Deacon Elihu Osgood, remembered it.” Deacon Osgood told Wilder that he had been out looking for his cows when he “saw the trees on the hill before him rise and fall and sway to and fro.” Either Osgood misremembered or he was up very early that morning because the earthquake struck at about 4:30 AM under a bright, moonlit sky. The quake, estimated to have registered about 6.3 on the Richter scale, started beneath the waters off Cape Ann, and – within seconds – hundreds of chimneys and steeples toppled and gable ends of buildings collapsed in Boston. The vibrations were felt from Nova Scotia to the Chesapeake Bay and from Lake Champlain to a ship two hundred miles off the coast of Massachusetts.

1755, 1779 and 1795: “So warm these winters that farmers plowed their fields.”

1780: “First snow storm, November 25; others followed to depth of three or four feet, continually drifted by cold northwest wind. So cold for six weeks that there was no melt on south-facing roofs.” Sawin was told that the winter of 1780 was almost as cold as that of 1741.

1782: “Snow fell four feet deep on November 12 and continued until April 12.”

1785: “February 10: 19 degrees below zero. February 17: 16 degrees below zero.”

1788: “Very hard. A great wind blew down large portions of the forest on Sawin Hill.” (Presumably, this refers to the area on which Thomas Sawin’s father later settled, that is, today’s Rockwell Hill.)

1794: “The grains, flax and leaves of trees were killed by a severe frost on June 19.”
1795: “December very warm.”
1796: “No snow until February 2.”
1800: “November snows as usual; thaw began near end of November and at Christmas the strawberries blossomed.”
1806: “A total solar eclipse on June 16th.”
1832: “So cold all summer that the corn was three weeks behind;” severe frosts on September 12 and 13.
1835: “January 4: 23 degrees below zero at New Haven and later in winter 26 ½ degrees below zero. Coldest winter ever known. Such severe winters occur only three or four times a century.”
1836: “Spring very early; grass was mowed in April.”
1845: “A brilliant meteor.”
1856-57: “Winter long and very cold, storms and winds. The thermometer at my house fell below zero six or seven times. One day it was below zero all day and all night. The following spring and summer were the wettest ever known.”

Absent from Sawin’s notes is any mention of a devastating blight which occurred in both 1770 and 1771: a yellow-striped, brown army worm, called a “palmer-worm” by Yale president Timothy Dwight, ate crops and trees bare in the upper Connecticut River valley from Massachusetts all the way up to northern New Hampshire. One New Hampshire historian gave the following account of this “Northern Army:”

“They marched from the north and northwest...to the east and south. So numerous were the worms that they hid the ground completely. They crawled over houses and barns, covering every inch of the boards and shingles. Every stalk of corn and wheat was doomed. The inhabitants dug trenches, but they soon filled them...and the remaining

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15 Reverend Samuel D. King, Diary, 1777–1812, Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library, Deerfield, Massachusetts.
Curiously, Sawin also failed to talk about the strange summer of 1816, one that was for a long time referred to as the “year without a summer” and “eighteen-hundred-and-froze-to-death.” The eruption of Mount Tambora in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) on April 10, 1815, created in New England, one year later, a persistent “dry fog” that reddened and dimmed the sunlight and was not dispersed by either wind or rain. As a consequence of the continual fog, frosts were reported throughout the summer, setting into motion a devastating domino effect: crop failures caused prices of grain and other agricultural products to soar, which forced farmers to sell their farm animals; this drove down the price of meat and increased the cost of transportation (in this pre-train era), which further increased the price of crops coming from elsewhere. One result of this adversity was that thousands of people left New England in search of a better climate and richer soils to the west. Between 1815 and 1817 in Vermont, for example, the population shrank by 10,000 to 15,000 people. In Wendell, it will be remembered, 1815 marked the turning point in the town’s population growth; after that, it began its long, nearly uninterrupted descent.

Sawin, who came to Wendell at the height of its prosperity, witnessed the effects on the landscape of the departure of many of the town’s families: abandoned farms, vacant houses, and empty, overgrown pastures. He ended his chapter on the abundance that had once been found in – or imported to – Wendell with the following melancholy observation: “when the hills have been left for half a century uncultivated…the effect is, it must be confessed, very cheerless, and even in a dry midsummer, desolate.”

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Given the rocky, hilly terrain and poor soil of Wendell, it is worth asking what drew the earliest settlers to the town. A hope for increased economic opportunity despite difficult conditions is the obvious answer. Other reasons, given by Sawin, were these:

1. Overflowing eastern towns and increased population; there were, he said, more and more young people than those towns could accommodate.
2. The lure of a frontier life and the love of freedom.
3. Tall-tales of "prodigious crops and a climate so mild cattle could live in the woods all winter."
4. The vigor, courage, and industry of earlier generations.

A fifth factor contributing to settlement can be found in the government's enormous unpaid debt left over from its long string of wars in alliance with the British against the French and the Indians.

In winning the French wars, the New England colonies had made extraordinary efforts and suffered severe losses. These brought on inflation and debts for both colonies and towns, and entailed heavy taxation. Thousands of soldiers had to be paid or otherwise rewarded, and colony treasuries were empty. Debts had to be met, but financial resources were exhausted. The single important available asset of the colonies was unallotted land.¹⁹

To compensate the families or descendants of men who had served in those wars and to pay for other non-military services, such as the building of a road from Lancaster to the Connecticut River, the Massachusetts General Court in 1735 established twenty-six land grants or "plantations" along the upper Connecticut River valley. In addition to debt reduction, this granting of provincial territory was motivated by the hope that white settlements in the wilderness would help protect the colonists from further "Indian" attacks. Plantations were either given or sold to "proprietors," who were charged with building a fort and starting a community. Shutesbury was the unorganized plantation called

“Roadtown,” Hardwick was “Lambstown Plantation,” Warwick was “Gardner’s Canada Plantation,” and, as Sawin noted when he was shown the town records of Erving by its clerk, L. L. Alexander, Erving was “Erving’s Plantation.”

Another reason for people making their way into this previously unsettled territory was the search for new sources of lumber. Wendell’s single largest natural resource was its essentially uncut forests and, as deforestation increased in towns to the east, the value of timber rose proportionately. An added value to logging, as Sawin noted, was that “land just redeemed from the trees was more productive than old fields.”

Finally, with the passing down of land from one generation to the next, many family farms had become “too small for further subdivision.” One son inherited his father’s land, but the rest of the boys either had to seek – and pay for – land elsewhere or learn a trade to support themselves.

Until Wendell incorporated in 1781, its southern half formed part of Shutesbury and its northern half belonged to Erving’s Plantation. Settlers pushing north from Shutesbury arrived in what would become the southern part of Wendell at just about the same time that other settlers chopped their way into the area south of the Millers River, the area that would later be the northern part of Wendell. Coincidentally, both groups hailed from Lancaster, forty-eight miles to the east. Later, in 1803, a large tract on the town’s western edge was annexed from Montague. Here is a closer look at these three areas:

1. North Shutesbury/south Wendell

In 1733, a company of about ninety young men from Lancaster began cutting a sled road through the forested wilderness from Lancaster to the Connecticut River in Sunderland, and on April 18, 1735, at their request, they received a land grant of six square miles from the colonial court as remuneration. Fittingly, they named the place “Roadtown,” which it remained until the town was incorporated in 1761 and re-named Shutesbury in honor of Samuel Shute, governor of Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

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in 1716. The first house in Shutesbury was built about 1736 just east of the present-day Common, but the progress of settlement was difficult and slow. Thus, it wasn’t until the 1750s that Roadtown settlers made their way up to the northern areas of Shutesbury. Bezaliel Wilder is said to have been one of the first. As late as 1771, only 4.8% (or 956 acres) of Shutesbury’s total acreage had been “improved;” the rest was still wilderness. Before Wendell’s incorporation, the old northern boundary of Shutesbury ran through Wendell along a horizontal line that crossed Wendell Depot Road about where the Town Highway Department stands today.

2. Ervingshire/north Wendell
Historians Josiah G. Holland and Louis Everts inform us that the tract of land that today comprises both the town of Erving and the region running south from the Millers River to the old north line of Shutesbury was purchased by a company of proprietors from the Province of Massachusetts Bay in 1751 for “three coppers per acre” and sold by them, one year later, to John Erving, Esquire, of Boston. Many early land transactions refer specifically to the land Captain Erving bought of the Province, which suggests that this company of proprietors may have been one and the same as the “Committee of the Great and General Court” who sold the entire tract to John Erving. In any event, Mr. Erving’s purchase on December 28, 1752 included the 5,719 acres lying south of the Millers River. Almost immediately, he began selling off lots to settlers and speculators.

John Erving, Esq., and his wife, Abigail Phillips Erving.

Paintings by John Singleton Copley, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

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21 Merchant, Ecological Revolutions, 277.
22 See Appendix I.
Erving was born in 1693 in the Orkney Islands, Scotland. He came to Boston as a boy with his father and got his start ferrying passengers across the Charles River on Harvard’s Commencement Day. He ultimately became one of the wealthiest merchants in Boston and acquired vast landholdings throughout New England. He was a “prodigious lender,” and his debtors included Paul Revere, John Hancock, and the Colony of Massachusetts Bay. His twelve-mile holding north and south of the Millers River became known variously as Erving’s Grant, Erving’s Plantation, Erving’s Land, and Ervingshire. While the modern town of Erving remained “undisturbed forest,” as Sawin says, until 1800, settlers moved onto the land south of the Millers River as early as 1752. Aaron Osgood and his family were the first, and they – like the Roadtown settlers – came from Lancaster. The town that would become Wendell began to be populated by families from Lancaster, but they arrived – at the same time – from two entirely opposite directions.

In 1788, surveyor Joseph Metcalf of Orange delineated all the land from the Millers River south to the original north line of Shutesbury into more or less of a grid pattern. (See map under “Aaron Osgood.”) Metcalf’s map shows that certain lots, including the “Settlers’ Lots” near the center of town, had already been sold off to various owners. Another map, labeled “1800” (see “Maps”), is a combination of Metcalf’s south Ervingshire and Dwight’s north Shutesbury – in other words, Wendell.

3. Montague/west Wendell

In 1803, Wendell annexed a one-mile-wide tract of land and an area called “Benjamin Hill Gore” from Montague. A “gore” is defined as a small piece of land, usually triangular in shape, and this addition does indeed form a triangle reaching from the western slope of Bear Mountain to the edge of Montague; attached to the gore is the long one-mile wide tract that reaches south to the modern border with Shutesbury. The area had been settled about 1770, but sparsely so. Sawin’s notes state that, in 1802, thirty people in Montague, who were dissatisfied with Montague’s

decision to put a steeple on their meeting house, petitioned to be joined to the Town of Wendell. Whether the 1803 annexation was related to this petition is not clear.
BEZALIEL WILDER

First Settler of South Wendell

In early Wendell, there were at least two strains of Wilder families – a name which prevails in town two hundred and sixty years later. Bezaliel Wilder and Silas Wilder were the patriarchs of each family. Silas, who came to Wendell several decades after Bezaliel, appears later in this book.

Bezaliel Wilder (b. 1714) was one of eleven children born to Damaris Whitcomb and Nathaniel Wilder, a farmer in Lancaster.25 Leaving home in his early twenties, Bezaliel joined the group of Lancaster men who built the road connecting Lancaster to the Connecticut River and established Roadtown. There are ten Wilder men listed by historian Everts as having being part of this crew26 and, although Bezaliel is not on that list, one of his nephews informed Sawin that Bezaliel had indeed been among them. In 1737, Bezaliel built a sawmill on the south side of Roaring Brook and was granted twenty acres and fifty pounds as encouragement to provide boards for housing to new settlers in Roadtown.27 About 1746, Bezaliel, then thirty-two, married Elizabeth Adams. Presumably, it was around this date that he bought or was granted a 283-acre tract of land that today fronts on Wendell’s Locke Hill Road (near #29 and #35) and extends all the way back to the west branch of the Swift River. Even for its time, it was a huge property. According to the 1771 Valuation List, Bezaliel Wilder owned one dwelling, one iron works, four acres of pasture land, three acres of tillage land, four acres of mowing land, and sixteen acres of fresh meadow; the rest of his acreage had probably not been cut or, to use the terminology of the time, “improved.” He also owned three cows, one horse, four oxen, eight goats and sheep, and two swine, and his farm produced six barrels of cider and thirty bushels of grain per year.

27 Ibid.
(the amount needed to feed a family)\textsuperscript{28} as well as eight tons of hay for the animals.

Bezaliel and Elizabeth had three children, among whom he equally divided his large property before his death at age seventy-seven. (Bezaliel Wilder I’s death is often given as either 1731 or 1759; both are wrong. Wendell’s death records state that Bezaliel Wilder died on June 30, 1791.) The children of Bezaliel and Elizabeth were:

1. Bezaliel II, born 1747, married Sarah Adams, probably a cousin. They had seven children in Wendell. He died in 1829, at age eighty-two, and she died in 1840, also eighty-two; both are buried in Center Cemetery.
2. Elizabeth, born in 1749, married John Ross, a neighbor and a founder of the Wendell Congregational church. He built his house across from #114 Locke’s Village Road and its cellar hole is there today.
3. Nathaniel, born in 1751, married Anna Johnson in Wendell in 1784. They had three boys and one girl. Anna died in 1821, and he died in 1826. The whole family is buried in Center Cemetery.

Bezaliel’s younger brother Aholiab (b. 1716) married Catherine Wetherbee, daughter of John Wetherbee III (see “Oliver and John Wetherbee”) in 1738 in Lancaster and when Catherine died in 1749, Aholiab quickly took Elizabeth Fulton of Petersham as his second wife. It may have been then that Aholiab joined his brother in Shutesbury. Ten years later, Aholiab himself died. Left fatherless, Aholiab’s seventeen-year-old son, Aholiab II, was placed under the guardianship of a man named Ebenezer Childs in Roadtown,\textsuperscript{29} but at some later date the young man chose to live with his uncle Bezaliel. On the 1771 Wendell Valuation List, Aholiab Wilder II owns two horses and two oxen but no real estate, which suggests that at almost thirty years old he was still living with his uncle’s family. He appears next in a 1793 entry made in the journal of Wendell’s first Congregational pastor. Reverend Kilburn reported that church members Aholiab Wilder

\textsuperscript{28} Merchant, Ecological Revolutions, 183.

\textsuperscript{29} Hampshire County Probate Records; Volume 9, Page 234.
and Joanne Perry publicly confessed to the sin of “incontinence previous to marriage.” The records of both the Congregational and Baptist churches in Wendell make evident that such confessions were not infrequent.) In the year following their confession, Aholiab and Joanne married. By the 1800 census, they had relocated to Dummerston, Vermont, and from there they went to live on the shores of Lake Erie at Sandy Creek, New York, where they both died.

Joshua Wilder (b. 1712), a younger brother of Bezaliel I and Aholiab I, married Sarah Keyes and she gave birth to Nathaniel Wilder in Princeton, Massachusetts, on February 22, 1751. This Nathaniel would grow up in Belchertown, learn how to make shoes, buy a farm in Ware, sell it and move to Wendell, marry a woman named Lydia Brown, serve in the Revolutionary War, have ten children, work as a farmer, go by the moniker “Hemlock,” and become the town’s oldest citizen, dying on February 24, 1851, at the age of one hundred years and two days. Interviewed by Sawin shortly before his death, Hemlock shared his memories of his move to Wendell in 1779:

I took with me [from Ware] by ox-team twenty bushels of grain and a barrel of pork. Abode through summer with my uncle, Bezaliel Wilder, father of old Mr. Bezaliel, settled towards town. [I had] two children then, Jonas, five years, and Roseanne, two years. My team when bringing goods struck the great rocks by Mr. Charles Haskell’s [#213 Locke’s Hill Road] and I went on foot to Bezaliel’s and they took their team and went down for mine. The proceeds of my farm in Ware, being continental money, fell and I had only enough to put up a frame for my house. [Then] I partly finished it and kept my potatoes at Uncle B’s [bringing over] a bag at a time which I kept overhead near the fire which I kept up day and night the first winter. I sheltered my cow behind a great hemlock and fed him with branches and weeds.

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31 Beaman, Centennial Celebration, 21.
Hemlock Wilder also described some of the more unusual things he had seen in his long life as a farmer. Some of these were:

A lamb with two mouths, four eyes and two noses, but only two ears and one head. Also, a small pumpkin within another, both perfectly formed, inner one about the size of a goose egg. [Also] a cabbage stump becoming twenty-eight small, but perfect heads.

Another of Hemlock’s recollections refers to the days before the meetinghouse was built:

While Deacon Jonathan Osgood who lived in a small poor house was building his frame house, he said if any would help him he would allow so much to them and expend it on a meeting house when they should build [it], which offer many accepted. After it [Osgood’s house] was done, he said that if they had a mind to have meetings in it they were welcome. And accordingly they had Sabbath and other meetings there, seats being made of boards etc and after a while a rustic pulpit.

Twenty-three years after Hemlock’s death, he was remembered by Reverend N. S. Dickinson, a former pastor of the Congregational church, with these words:

He was a soldier in the Revolutionary War and he could distinctly remember and relate much concerning the events of those stirring times. When he was past ninety-five years, he would walk the three miles to Church. He walked with form as erect, step as elastic and eye as bright as men half his age. He was once seen in the hayfield mowing in the company of his son, grandson, and great-grandson, hardly showing signs that his vigor had abated.32

One of Hemlock’s nine children was Jonas Brown Wilder (1776–1862). In 1804, Jonas married Rebecca Leach, sister of Gardner Leach and daughter of Lemuel Leach, and they lived on Rockwell Hill Road, one house north of the Sawins. Jonas and Rebecca had four boys, the first three of whom studied to be teachers at New Salem Academy, and the cost of schooling them put Jonas

into debt.\textsuperscript{33} When the fourth son, Jonas II, turned thirteen, he became a shoemaker with the intention of using his earnings to help ease the family’s financial burden. True to his word, he paid off the last dollar of that debt on his twenty-first birthday, thus allowing the family to keep their homestead.\textsuperscript{34} As an adult, Jonas II spent fifty years working for various railroads and inventing all sorts of useful things (a train buckboard, a refrigeration unit, and a self-inking stamp), none of which he ever bothered to patent.\textsuperscript{35} At eighty-two, as vigorous a man as his grandfather Hemlock had been, he quit the railroad and began farming, an occupation which he pursued in Woodstock, Vermont, right up to his death there in 1906, at ninety-three years old.

\textit{Genealogical Notes:}

There are twenty Wilders buried in Center Cemetery and eight in South Cemetery. They are grouped here in their individual family units, and the ages at which they died, if known, have been added. In Center Cemetery are:

1. Bezaliel Wilder II, eighty-two; Sara Adams Wilder, eighty-two; and their daughter Sarah.
2. Nathaniel Wilder (son of Bezaliel I), seventy-five; Anna Johnson Wilder, seventy-four; daughter Abigail, fifteen; son Bezaliel, twenty-three; son Nathaniel, sixty-five; and son Joseph, ninety-two.
3. Nathaniel “Hemlock” Wilder (son of Bezaliel I’s brother, Joshua), one hundred; Lydia Brown Wilder; their daughter Rosanna, eighty-eight; son Joshua, fourteen; Molly (young); and one illegible name.
4. Levi Wilder (grandson of Bezaliel I, son of Bezaliel II), sixty-two and his wife, Sarah Pierce Wilder, ninety-two, (she is actually buried in Sunderland, but her name is on his headstone). Levi was a shoe-maker.
5. J. Milton Wilder (lineage uncertain; he died in 1998) and his wife, Sally.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
In South Cemetery are:

1. Jonas Brown Wilder (son of Nathaniel “Hemlock” and Lydia), ninety, and Rebecca Leach Wilder, eighty; their son Abel West Wilder, seventy-seven (moderator of the Methodist church for thirty years); Azubah Powers Wilder, sixty-seven, wife of Jonas’s brother, Daniel Wilder, Esq. Azubah and Daniel share a gravestone, but his death date was never marked on it. He died in 1871, age seventy-eight, of “cancer in head.” (Sawin judged Daniel Wilder, farmer, surveyor and Justice of the Peace, to be “a natural scholar and shrewd, but bigoted and thoughtless.”)

2. Lorenzo Wilder (grandson of Jonas Brown Wilder and son of Abel West Wilder and Sarah Brooks), fifty-one, and his wife, Elizabeth Hunt Wilder, eighty-six; their daughter Emma, twenty-eight.


There were, of course, many others in the extended Wilder family. Some are listed in the town’s death records, but not found in its cemeteries; others grew up, moved on, and were laid to rest elsewhere.

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On December 29, 1752, a certain Aaron Osgood (b. 1706 in Lancaster, son of Hooker Osgood) bought from John Erving, Esq. a 215-acre property and a few other smaller lots in the vast tract of land between the northern line of Roadtown and the Millers River that Erving had purchased the previous day. This was one of three land transactions made that day in that place, and, together, they constitute the first properties to be sold “in the land Captain Erving bought of the Province.” The two other buyers on that date were Samuel Locke and William Hutson, both also from Lancaster, but neither appears in any other way in the town’s earliest records. Subsequent deeds purchased by Aaron Osgood from John Erving over the next two years give Aaron’s residence as Lancaster, but then, on a deed dated January 1755, the buyer is identified as “Aaron Osgood of Ervingshire.” This indicates that Aaron Osgood “officially” established residency in what would become the north part of Wendell sometime in 1754, a fact upheld by Sawin. (In an 1850 interview with the widow Eunice Leach, daughter of Aaron’s son Lieutenant Luke Osgood, Sawin was told that Luke Osgood came to Ervingshire with his father when he was seven years old; born in 1747, he would indeed have been seven in 1754.) Aaron built his house, the “first frame house in Wendell,” on the west side of Wendell Depot Road (#107 today).

Sawin, with the exception of one small note to himself, repeatedly misidentified Luke’s father as “Thomas,” not Aaron. This error was reiterated by Sawin’s contemporary, historian Josiah Gilbert Holland who, as we shall see further on, appears to have relied on Sawin for his Wendell data. All available genealogies,
however, clearly state that Luke Osgood’s father was Aaron. There was a Thomas Osgood who arrived in Wendell in 1754, but he was one of Aaron’s sons; he was only twenty years old at the time and came in the company of his father, his brand-new stepmother, and his eight siblings. Additionally, the first record of any land sale to Thomas Osgood was his purchase of two lots (#1 and #10) from his father in August 1763. The net result of this error by Sawin is that Thomas Osgood has come down to us as the first settler of Ervingshire. For the record then, let it be stated that it was Thomas’s father, Aaron Osgood of Lancaster, who appears to have been that first intrepid soul. Throughout his years in Wendell, Aaron bought and sold a great deal of property. As for Thomas, he married Hepzibah Houlton in New Salem in 1759. Her father was a cordwainer and owner of a gristmill in that town. When Hepzibah died, Thomas married Sarah Learned, also of New Salem. Finally, in the 1780s, Thomas relocated to Whitehall, New York, where he died in 1786 at the age of fifty-two. Aaron’s date and place of death are more elusive. One genealogy states that he went with Thomas to Whitehall and later to “Black River Country,” also in New York, but beyond that history is mute.

Soon after Aaron’s bold initiative in coming to the wilderness of what would be Wendell, some of his nephews followed suit. Captain Josiah Osgood (son of Aaron’s brother David) was married and starting a family in Wendell in the 1760s. He built his house at the corner of Wendell Depot and Farley Roads, where the Kemsley Academy stands today. In 1771, Deacon Jonathan Osgood (son of Aaron’s brother Jonathan) built his home on Locke’s Village Road next to the present Senior Center. In 1789, he deeded land for a town common to be used for cattle to graze

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42 Aaron’s first wife, Eunice White, died in Lancaster in 1751; in 1754, Aaron married Hannah Warner.
44 Ibid.
upon and for a military training field; included in the deed was a provision for a row of stables to stand behind the meetinghouse, land for which he had earlier sold to the Congregational church for “eight pounds, lawful money.”

Surveyor Joseph Metcalf’s 1788 map of the land on either side of the Millers River, at what is now Erving, shows a 400-acre tract of land in the center of north Wendell, known as the “Settlers’ Lots,” owned by David Osgood II (son of Aaron’s brother David). Individual lots within the 400-acre tract are not indicated

Detail from Metcalf’s 1788 survey of north Wendell. Note the names of Jon Crosbee, David Osgood, and Henry Sweetser (“Switzer”). Also note: (1) the north-south road, which is today partly Wendell Depot Road and partly the defunct old Northfield Road, (2) the road going west is Stone Road at its start and Forley Road where it dips to the south and (3) the road to the east is both a stretch of Wendell Depot Road and Plain Road. (Map, part of the collection given by Dave Allen, is owned by the Wendell Library.)

on this map, but land records show that in December 1770 David Osgood II paid 180 pounds to John Erving for these 410 acres laid out into seven lots, four on the east side of the road and three on the west side. David Osgood II appears to have bought this and other properties in Wendell, but not to have lived in town, opting instead to go to Rutland, Vermont, where he became a large land owner and cattle dealer.

To imagine the impact the early Osgoods had on Wendell, we need only take into account the numerous children they produced: Aaron’s sixteen children by two wives, Jonathan’s ten children, also by two wives, and Josiah’s twelve children total thirty-eight Osgood children – all of whom grew up in Wendell. As adults, many moved west, but many also stayed in town, marrying and raising large families of their own.

A look at the rudimentary details of the lives of the progeny of these men affords a pretty clear picture of some trends in Wendell in its early days. Take, for example, Aaron’s nephew Captain Josiah Osgood, born in Lancaster in 1740. Josiah married Jane, daughter of Zaccheus Boynton, in 1760 and came to Wendell soon afterwards. From 1762 to 1788, Jane gave birth at more or less two year intervals, bringing a total of twelve children into the world – and all of them survived childhood, which was a very unusual circumstance in colonial America. When Jane died in Wendell in 1822, Josiah went with some of his grown children to settle in Verona, New York, where he died in 1830. Here is a list of Josiah and Jane’s children and what became of them:

1. Polly, b. 1762, married her cousin Elihu Osgood (son of Deacon Jonathan Osgood), a farmer and a deacon of the Baptist church; they raised four children in Wendell.
4. Joseph, b. 1768, married Sarah (“Sally”) Graves of Sunderland (see his story below).

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5. David, b. 1770, married his cousin Betsy Osgood (daughter of Deacon Jonathan Osgood) and went to Verona, New York, where he was a farmer and a deacon of the Baptist church.

6. Eunice, b. 1772, married her cousin Samuel Osgood, son of Deacon Jonathan Osgood; when he died, she married Samuel Puffer of Sunderland.

7. John, b. 1774, a merchant, married his cousin Hannah Osgood (daughter of Aaron’s son Luke); when he died in 1820, Hannah married her cousin Captain Jonathan Crosby.

8. Solomon, b. 1776, married Abigail Bartlett; he died in Eaton, New York, she in Michigan.


10. Jane, b. 1782, married Eben Johnson of Moretown, Vermont, and died there in 1863.

11. Luther, b. 1787, married his cousin Lucy Osgood (daughter of Deacon Jonathan Osgood) and went to Verona, New York, where he was a farmer.

12. Eliza, b. 1788, married Elmer Howe who built a house in Gill, where one of their sons became a tobacco farmer.

Five of the twelve Osgood siblings married their cousins, six moved west to New York (two went to the same town, but all six settled not far from each other), one went north to Vermont, and five stayed in or near Wendell. Most were farmers, and two were deacons of the Baptist church. Turning now to Josiah and Jane’s son Joseph (1768–1842) for a look at the generation that followed theirs, we find that in 1792 Joseph purchased a 155-acre property on Boundary Brook in what was then Montague. (Nine years later, that area was annexed to Wendell.) He worked as a tanner and a currier. He and his wife, Sally Graves, had five children – less than half the number his mother bore:

1. Norman (1794–1866), the only son, married Eliza Gates, daughter of Silas and Betsy Gates of Wendell. (This was the Betsy Gates who, after her husband’s death, sold her “widow’s thirds” to Sawin’s father.) Norman was a Baptist

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farmer and sawmiller, described by Sawin as “a moderate man [who] bears no ill report.” In the mid-1850s, Norman and Eliza shared their home, purchased from his father, with their widowed eldest daughter and her two children. (Today, that farm – at the end of Coldbrook Road – is still a farm, and the ruins of Osgood’s sawmill are very much in evidence.) In 1866, after spending their whole lives there, Norman and Eliza sold the property and went to live in Leverett with their daughter Sarah. Norman died soon thereafter, while Eliza lived on for another twenty years.

2. Sarah Ann (1799–1843) died at age forty-four.
4. Phila (1806–1859) married Dr. Butler Wilmarth. He was born illegitimately and became an unlicensed, but thoroughly respected physician in Montague. In 1842, they moved to the Utopian Socialist Commune of Hopedale, Massachusetts, where they offered hydropathy (water cure) treatments to the ailing. Curiously, Butler drowned in the aftermath of a train accident in 1853.49
5. Lydia (1809–1844) married the Baptist Reverend Otis Fisher of Wendell and went to Illinois; she died at age thirty-five.

House purchased by Norman Osgood from his father, Joseph, in the 1840s. Original date of construction is unknown, but surmised to be soon after Joseph’s purchase of the land in 1792.

Finally, we take a look at Norman and Eliza’s children, the great-grandchildren of early settler, Captain Josiah Osgood:

49 For an interesting account of Mr. and Mrs. Wilmarth, Hopedale, and the water cure, see “The Wilmarths and the Water Cure,” http://www.1840hope.com/wilmarth.html.
1. Maryette (1823–1893) married Chester Merchant and went to live in his family home (at #58 Mormon Hollow Road). At his death in 1853, she was only thirty years old; she never remarried and died, at the age of seventy, in Athol.


3. Joseph (1827– ) married Alicia Ann Foster Baker of Shutesbury, where they bought a farm after the second of their four children was born; they lived there for forty-three years as upstanding members of the community and church.

4. Howard (1833–1911) spent a year at Amherst College followed by a year of medical studies with Dr. Lucius Cooke (see “Lucius Cooke”) in Wendell before going to Cincinnati, Ohio, where he graduated in 1856 from the Eclectic Medical Institute. He was assistant surgeon of the Indiana Volunteer Cavalry in the Civil War and practiced medicine in Indiana for over fifty years.

This long account of four generations of one Osgood family shows three trends that developed over that hundred-year period in both Wendell and the larger population of New England: (1) an expansion of people’s lives outside of the community, as evidenced by less marrying between cousins and neighbors, (2) a significantly lower birth rate, and (3) a persistent flow of people away from their small rural town. Some stayed in the general vicinity of Wendell, but many others joined the steady stream of people moving out to the new territories further and further to the west.

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THE EARLY LANDSCAPE

...when this region was first known it was covered with an unbroken forest. And it is well known that the forest gradually disappeared before the axe of the settlers. – Thomas E. Sawin

Before returning to further accounts of the early settlers, it may be helpful to imagine the transformations taking place as the settlers began to penetrate and inhabit the forested landscape.

We cannot know how the unbroken wilderness of what would be Wendell appeared to the first settlers, but the evidence reveals that when Aaron Osgood and his family chopped their way up the four-mile-long hill leading from the Millers River to the plateau at the top, they were met with towering white pines, hickories, chestnuts, oaks, maples, birch, beech, spruce, red pine, and others. The hardwoods may have been as tall as 120 feet, and the white pines may have even reached up to 150 feet with trunks of more than four feet at their base.50 It is almost inconceivable to imagine the boil of emotions in the souls of the pioneers as they searched for suitable sites for homesteads – and once they had located a relatively flat piece of land, on property they may have paid for sight unseen, with what mixture of hope, dismay, and fear did they contemplate their surround?

The settlement agreements drawn up by the government in the establishment of “plantations” contained specific stipulations: houses were usually to be eighteen feet square, studded at least every seven feet, and eight acres of land had to be cleared: four for tillage and four for English grass.51 The time frame given each settler to accomplish this work was normally five years. Long, hard work was inescapable.

The first order of business was to clear enough land to build a dwelling which, in a not uncommon practice, often happened even before making final payment on the land. Having no more than an axe and a cross-cut saw, the work involved in felling

51 Everts, History of the Connecticut Valley, 758.
trees for lumber and firewood was arduous and time-consuming. To mill harvested wood into lumber, a sawmill had to be set up. Then, before house construction could begin, a four to six feet deep cellar hole for winter food storage had to be dug and lined with stone pulled from the ground. (Cellar holes were often much smaller than the houses that stood on top of them due to later additions such as kitchens, porches, and ells which were built on sills or footings that disappeared over time.) A well also had to be dug and lined with stone; most were sited right outside the back end of the house. Ideally, of course, the well was dug before the digging of the cellar. Sawin tells of a David Johnson, who did things backwards and paid for it: he built a log house just north of Captain Henry Sweetser’s house on Bear Mountain Road only to find that there was no water there, forcing him to abandon that house and build another. Concurrent with the construction of a well and a simple house with fireplace and chimney, land had to be cleared for growing food for family and animals. Trees were felled in summer, left to deteriorate over the winter, and burned along with the understory the following spring.\textsuperscript{52} Then, horses or oxen were harnessed to pull the charred stumps from the ground. Often, if the need for cleared land was not immediate, trees were merely girdled and left to rot which prevented the trees from leafing out, and corn and other grains were planted in mounds beneath them.\textsuperscript{53} Due to this practice, falling trees and tree-limbs were apparently a fairly common hazard to both humans and animals. (Sawin’s notes say that in June 1805, Ephraim Howe’s six-year-old son, Artemas, was “killed by a fall of timber at a visiting of a cyder [sic] mill house.”) When fields had been planted with oats and wheat, gristmills had to be built to turn the grains into flour. Finally, a vegetable garden and a small apple orchard, to meet the family’s demand for cider, were planted near the house; apple trees were often planted along the road so as not to fill up the hard-won clearings. It has been estimated that a farm that met all the food, fodder, and fuel needs of a typical family in eighteenth-century New England would require, depending on the fertility of the soil, between fifteen and thirty-five acres of

\textsuperscript{52} Garrison, \textit{Landscape and Material Life in Franklin County}, 117.

improved farmland, a one-acre lot for vegetables and fruits, and a thirty-acre woodlot – which meant that “a farm complete in all components would require a total of forty-five to sixty-five acres.”

During the decades that the Osgoods, the Wilders, and other settlers were occupied in establishing their farms in Ervingshire and north Shutesbury, the sight and smell of great fires burning in the forest must have been an everyday occurrence in late winter and early spring, and the din of hammering and tree-chopping must have been constant. The settlers depended on wood for the basics in their lives. They needed it not only to build houses, barns, and fences but also as a source of fuel for heat. Their demand for firewood was voracious: “a typical New England household probably consumed as much as thirty or forty cords of firewood per year.” The neighboring town of Warwick’s agreement with its first preacher included a provision for the heating of the parsonage with thirty-five cords of wood annually, while Wendell’s first preacher, Reverend Joseph Kilburn, was able to negotiate a supply of only thirty cords per year. Consuming such an amount of firewood is unthinkable today, but then the open fireplaces in every room of the house caused as much as 75% of the generated heat to go right up the chimney. Thirty to forty cords of wood can best be visualized as a stack of wood four feet wide, four feet high, and three hundred feet long, and obtaining such a woodpile meant cutting more than an acre of forest each year. Multiply this by the increasing number of families moving into Wendell in the second half of the 1700s and it is easy to understand how – and how quickly – the forest simply disappeared.

As more and more people arrived, more mills sprang up on the town’s ponds and streams, and these increased the need for roads. One of the oldest roads, built as early as 1756, ran along what is now Jennison Road and then turned north up Locke Hill Road,

54 Merchant, Ecological Revolutions, 183.
55 Cronon, Changes in the Land, 120.
57 Ibid.
58 Cronon, Changes in the Land, 120.
stopping short of the center of town until ten years later. (West Street is sometimes referred to as the oldest road in Wendell, but Sawin says it was not opened until 1786.) These first roads presented a constant challenge: they turned into a soup of mud in early spring, and when they dried out they were deeply rutted and embedded with protruding rocks. The town’s earliest records show that roads — specifically, the funds to create and maintain them — were a subject of great concern at every town meeting for decades. Historian Holland noted that the “roads [in Wendell]... have been a great burden to the town. For their building and support, the town had voted, previous to 1850, in money and labor, forty thousand dollars.”

With so much work to be done by relatively few people, it is no wonder that a full thirty years passed between the coming of the first settlers and the construction of a meetinghouse.

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While the Osgoods and the Wilders were hard at work gaining ground by felling the forest in north Wendell, the Locke family was busy establishing itself around the shores of a large pond, four-and-a-half miles to the south.

In the mid-1700s Jonas, Ebenezer, and Joseph Locke, three of the eight children of William and Jemima (Russell) Locke of Woburn, Massachusetts, ventured west and settled in Roadtown, along the shores of what came to be called Locke’s Pond, and later Lake Wyola. Jonas (b. 1726) was a joiner and a housewright. In June 1754, it was voted to give him eight pounds as an encouragement to build a gristmill on Locke’s Pond “to be in operation on November 1, following, to be kept in constant repair for twelve years.” The settlement there became known as Locke’s Mills, later changing its name to Locke’s Village. Jonas married aristocrat Mary Dwight, daughter of Brigadier General and Judge Joseph Dwight and his wife, Mary Pynchon. Following Shutesbury’s incorporation in 1761, Jonas was chosen to be not only town clerk, but also selectman and assessor. He served as a captain in the Revolutionary War and then moved to Deerfield, where he died in 1812.

Jonas’s brother Joseph (b. 1729) married Mary Ayers in Shutesbury in 1754. Like his brother, he was elected to the Select Board. On the 1771 Valuation List, he – not Jonas – is reported as the owner of a gristmill; perhaps he took it over from his brother. He also owned more farm animals than was the norm: sixteen goats and sheep and eight swine. He served in the Revolutionary War, rising to the rank of major, but he “died on his return within forty miles of home of camp fever,” a common name for a form of typhus which proliferates under poor sanitary conditions.

61 Holland, History of Western Massachusetts, 432.
The youngest of the Locke brothers was Ebenezer (b. 1732), and he is the one most associated with Wendell because of his children’s and grandchildren’s presence in town. Ebenezer married Hannah Randall in Stow, Massachusetts, in 1765, and he may have already been living in Shutesbury/Wendell at that time. They had eight children in Wendell. On the 1771 Valuation List, Ebenezer owned an “ironworks,” and his farm animals included one cow, six goats and sheep, and two swine. Twelve years later, he was a man of very comfortable means, his personal and real estate values matching those of Nathan Brewer and Oliver Wetherbee. In 1795, Hannah died at age fifty-three and was buried in Center Cemetery. Seven years later, Abigail Fisk of Petersham became Ebenezer’s second wife. Ebenezer died at age eighty-three in 1816, the year of the spotted fever epidemic in Wendell, but whether this was the cause of his death is unknown. He is buried next to Hannah.

Ebenezer and Hannah’s son Ephraim (1768–1842) married Thankful Peckham, and on December 5, 1796, he bought ninety-three acres in southern Wendell. Ephraim and Thankful, both buried in Center Cemetery, had ten children, but six of them, including two sets of twins, died as infants. Their one surviving son, Ephraim Locke II (1803–1875), married Nancy C. F. Orcutt, daughter of Calvin and Lydia Orcutt, in 1833. (Born in Vermont, she does not appear to have been related to the three Orcutt brothers who came to Wendell from Bridgewater in the 1760s.) Ephraim II, described by Sawin as “a prosperous farmer and an upright citizen,” bought a sixty-five-acre property from Francis Walkup just to the east of Wickett Pond in March 1830, and he lived there for the rest of his life, as demonstrated by both the 1858 and the 1871 maps, which show “E. Locke” at that site. His house, built before 1790 by Francis Walkup and still inhabited today, sits sideways to the road overlooking the pond. Sawin says that it was Francis Walkup who gave the pond

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63 The stories of these men are covered later in this book; see Appendix II for the 1783 Tax List.
64 Leading Citizens of Hampshire County, Massachusetts, (Boston: Biographical Review Publishing Company, 1896), 47.
65 Part of Lot #60; Book 74, Page 152, Franklin Co. Registry of Deeds; #131 Wickett Pond Road today.
its name, and Walkup’s logic is clear when we consider both the way water drains out of Wickett Pond and the definition of a wicket as a gate which regulates a flow of water to, for example, a waterwheel. In Walkup’s time, Jonathan Crosby’s sawmill and gristmill on Wickett Brook (Mormon Hollow Brook today) were dependent on the flow of water from Wickett Pond.

Ephraim Locke II’s house built by Francis Walkup sometime before 1790, according to Sawin. It has been restored, and many of its original features are still evident.

Ephraim and Nancy Locke had twelve children, but six of them – including a set of twins – died. (Different generations of twins in the Locke family all seem to have been congenitally weak.) Ephraim died in 1875, at seventy-two, of palsy, and Nancy died in 1887 of paralysis. They are buried next to each other in Center Cemetery.

**Genealogical Notes:**
The children of Ephraim I and Thankful Peckham Locke were:

1. Infant twins, both died 1797.
2. Thankful Locke, b. 1798.
3. Infant twins, died 1800 (one May 13, the other May 17)
4. Levina Locke, died December 12, 1802.
5. Huldah Locke, died December 20, 1802.
7. Alvira Locke, b. 1808.
8. Elsie Locke, b. 1810.
The children of Ephraim II and Nancy Orcutt Locke were:

1. Calvin Orcutt Locke, b. 1834, a farmer.
2. Thankful Lydia Locke, b. 1837, married Horace Vaughn of Greenwich, Massachusetts.
3. Perez R. Locke, born and died in 1839; buried in South Cemetery.
6 & 7. Twins, a boy and a girl, names unrecorded; in 1845, both died of croup at seven months old.
8. Mary Jennette Locke, b. 184_, married Charles Albion Heald of Amherst.
9. Martha E. Locke, b. 1847.
10. Almeda A. Locke, 1849–1851. Death records say she died “of a scald.”
11. Cora (“Corrie”) Etta Locke, 1851–1914. She married Almon Death (aka Dearth and Dirth), grandson of Abel Death and Nancy Cutting of Farley Road and son of Samuel Cutting Death. The Death name apparently did not sit well with those who bore it, so it was changed – sometimes legally, sometimes not – by many of them. Cora and Almon Dirth lived on the south side of Wickett Pond, and Dirth Road is named after him.
12. Myra A. Locke, b. 1853. She died at nine months of “a disease of the heart.”

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Another early settler and an organizer of the First Congregational Church was Captain Henry Sweetser (b. 1739) who married Lucy Johnson (b. 1739) in Leominster, Massachusetts, in 1763. Captain Henry Sweetser’s granddaughter-in-law, Sarah Sweetser, told Sawin that notations made in an old family Bible indicated that Captain Henry, with his wife and baby daughter, settled in Wendell in the winter of 1765-6. Henry’s father, Phillip Sweetser, lived with them and died in Wendell at the age of ninety-two in 1795.\(^{66}\) Henry bought his land from John Erving, and the deed included the buildings on the property, which, Sawin surmised, were “probably those built by himself before buying.” (Sweetser’s land lies at the present end of Bear Mountain Road, but from 1796 to 1826 that road continued all the way down to the Millers River.) Sarah Sweetser also told Sawin that it was Henry’s father-in-law, David Johnson, who had to abandon the log house he built just north of Henry’s house for lack of finding water there. Johnson built his second house directly across the road from Henry and Lucy.

Sawin recounts the following story, told to him by Joseph Fiske:

> The first house built by Henry Sweetser was burnt in 1773, winter. Straw had been put into the cellar to cover the potatoes from frost and was caught by a candle and was [thought] to have been put out by the woman, Mrs. Sweetser, but in a little while the whole house was in flames and the men, being absent after a load of wood and the well filled with ice and snow, there was nothing to arrest the fire. The [old house] was replaced in part by the neighbors turning out freely to procure timbers and put it up...The furniture was all lost. The next house was only one story.

Henry Sweetser was commissioned on May 10, 1776, and he served in the Revolutionary War as a second lieutenant in Captain Aaron Osgood’s 7th Company in the Hampshire County Regiment. (This was Aaron Osgood II, son of the first settler;\(^{66}\) Reverend Joseph Kilburn, _Journal_, in the archives of the Congregational Church Headquarters, Boston.)
Wendell formed part of Hampshire County until the creation of Franklin County in 1811.) When he was promoted to captain is unknown. Besides taking an active part in the organization of the Congregational church, Henry served the town as a selectman. He died in Wendell in 1827 at the age of eighty-nine, and Lucy died in 1833 at ninety-four. They are both buried in Center Cemetery.

Captain Henry and Lucy had a total of ten children, but only five of them lived into adulthood. One who survived and lived a long life at the family’s Bear Mountain home was Nathan Sweetser (1768–1842). He married Beulah Fiske, sister of Revolutionary War soldier Zedekiah Fiske (and Zedekiah married Nathan’s sister Lucy; see “Fiske Family”). Beulah delivered twin girls, Lydia and Lucy, on May 22, 1797. The birth day, however, took a tragic turn when the twins and their mother died. Nathan remarried, in 1800; his second wife, Lydia Johnson (b. 1777), was probably related to his mother, Lucy Johnson.

Lydia bore ten children, the last of whom was Nathan Erving Sweetser (1819–1864). His name suggests a familial relationship, if not actual kinship, with the town’s original proprietor, and he used “Erving” as his first name. Sawin, rather uncharacteristically, had nothing but the highest praise for this man, whom he called “in person a nobleman, in spirit a son of truth.” Erving married Sarah Kilburn Armstrong, daughter of Deacon Martin and Mary Bent Armstrong (see “Samuel Bent” in the Genealogical Note to “Reverend Joseph Kilburn”). She was the Sarah Sweetser interviewed by Sawin.

Erving and Sarah raised their five children in the house his grandfather had built. According to both the 1850 census and Sawin, in the early 1850s, a young boy by the name of Willard Priest was under the couple’s care as well. But in 1861, thirty-eight-year-old Sarah died of “fever,” probably associated with the birth of her last child, Dwight. Then, tragically, in November 1864, Erving died of “pleuropneumonia” at age forty-three, leaving his children orphans – and the Select Board with a vacant seat. The five children were taken in by their mother’s father, Martin Armstrong, and his second wife, Almira French.
(In the 1980s, a quilt top was sent to the town of Wendell with no explanations given beyond a note sewn onto its back that credited Gertrude Dudley Hibbard of Springfield with its creation. The quilt’s design has many names, “Cat’s Cradle” and “Double Pyramids” among them, and it is surmised that Hibbard made the quilt around 1895. In each of the blank squares in the quilt’s design are hand-written names. There are forty-nine names in all. Research ultimately revealed something remarkable: everyone named on the quilt lived in Wendell in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, and all were related to each other by blood or marriage. The families represented are the Armstrongs, the Sweetsers, the Cadwells, the Dudleys, the Howards, the Needhams, the Osgoods, and the Phelps.)

With the deaths of Erving and Sarah Sweetser, ownership of the Sweetser homestead passed out of the family. Nothing more is known of it until the 1920s and 30s when it was owned by Alice and James Dugan. A topographical map from that period shows the name of the road leading to the house as Dugan Place (now Bear Mountain Road). Alice Dugan’s granddaughter, Sandy Poirier, describes her grandmother as a botanist who planted beautiful flower gardens and tended a “gorgeous smokebush” in front of the house. In the 1950s, after her grandmother had died and a school teacher was living in the old Sweetser house, Sandy often returned to Dugan Place to pick the blueberries which grew in profusion across the street in the place once inhabited by David Johnson, the man who couldn’t find water. (Sue Gauvin, who grew up in Wendell, remembers church breakfasts of blueberry pancakes made from berries picked there.) In the early 1960s, current Police Chief Ed Chase lived in the Sweetser house with his family, but by 1976, when John “Klondike” Koehler bought the property, the house had fallen into disrepair. Wishing to save the house if he could, Koehler had it examined by many experts, all of whom agreed that it was not only unfit for restoration but also so altered over time as to have lost its historical value. Deemed a liability, the house was demolished in 2012.

Genealogical Notes:
“Sweetser” is also found written as “Sweetsir” and “Switzer” in the old records.
Another member of the Johnson family, Arad, lived further down the road around 1845, but his relationship, if any, to the earlier David, Lucy, and Lydia Johnson is unknown.

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Jonathan Orcutt I and his wife, Experience Washburn, lived in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, where she gave birth to their three boys: Jonathan II in 1760, William in 1762, and Samuel in 1764. Two years after Samuel’s birth, at the age of twenty-eight, Experience died – probably in childbirth with her fourth child, who also died. Needing help with his three boys, Jonathan married again six months later. He and his second wife, Thankful Carey, had four children in New Salem, but then Thankful died – probably also in childbirth – in 1778. In 1779, Jonathan Orcutt took Mary Nye as his third wife, and their one daughter was born in 1780 in Wendell – a fact which establishes that year as the probable date of this Orcutt family’s arrival in Wendell.

Jonathan II and Samuel grew up to be blacksmiths, but William’s trade is unknown. In 1790, Samuel married Hepzibah (Hepsy) Smith of Gerry (later renamed Phillipston), and their six children were all born in Wendell. Only one small fact regarding Hepsy Smith Orcutt is found in Sawin’s notes: she was excommunicated from the Baptist church for “neglect of the covenant.” She died giving birth to her last child, Erastus, in August 1807; the following year, Samuel – by then carrying the rank of lieutenant – married Mary “Polly” Gray Wood. When Polly died in 1844, she was buried next to Hepsy in Center Cemetery, and her name was inscribed on Hepsy’s gravestone. Samuel was laid to rest with his two wives in 1848.

Sawin’s Map III, made in 1843, shows that “on the road over Leach’s Hill” were two homes: one lived in by “Smith Orcutt,” his wife, and children, and the other by Gardner Leach and his wife. Sawin also said that Smith Orcutt “has the estate for the care of Gardner Leach and his wife.” It was not clear who this Smith Orcutt was until I discovered that Hepsy Smith and Samuel Orcutt named their last child Erastus Smith Orcutt, and that he chose to be called “Smith,” perhaps in honor of his mother’s death at his birth. In 1833, Smith Orcutt married Susannah Leach, daughter of Gardner Leach and Susannah Macomber. As Gardner and his
wife got older and less able, Smith and Susannah cared for them, and what had been called Leach’s Hill took on the new name of Orcutt Hill. (This lies beyond the end of Rush Road and is accessible only by foot today). Of the “estate” belonging to Smith Orcutt, Sawin says that in December 1855, “House burnt in fire starting in the swill shop. Nearly all property lost. Never rebuilt. Families separated.” (Sawin’s script is difficult to read; the word before “shop” appears to be “swill,” meaning, perhaps, a place where kitchen refuse was mixed with water to feed to pigs.) Gardner and Susannah Leach spent their five remaining years together with their daughter Salome and her husband, Hollis Williams, at the intersection of Jennison and Rush Roads. Smith and Susannah Orcutt seem to have gone to New Salem.

As for Samuel Orcutt’s brother William, he married Oliver Wetherbee’s daughter Lucy (b. 1770), and their four children were born in Wendell. Their one son, William, could have carried on the Orcutt name in town had the family not gone to Kingsbury, New York, along with Lucy’s father Oliver Wetherbee, who had to leave town after his involvement in Shays’ Rebellion (see “Oliver Wetherbee”).

Samuel’s second brother, Jonathan Orcutt II, made his home in Athol, where he died in 1841. (Interestingly, he legally changed his name to George Richardson Orcutt. Whether this was because of some affinity with George B. Richardson, chair maker and builder of the second Baptist church in Wendell, is unknown, but probable.)

**Genealogical Notes:**
One of the four children of Samuel’s father, Jonathan Orcutt I, and his second wife, Thankful Carey, was Experience Orcutt, born in New Salem in 1776. She was named after her father’s first wife, Experience Washburn Orcutt, and was Samuel Orcutt’s half-sister. When she grew up, she married Silas Bullard I of Wendell in 1797. (See the *Genealogical Note* under “Martin and Charles Hager.”)

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Mary Orcutt (1805–1872), daughter of Samuel and Hepsy Orcutt, married Chester Leach, who bought Jonathan Crosby's house and farm on Farley Road in 1844 for $1225. (See “Jonathan Crosby.”)

The four children of Samuel Orcutt and Mary Gray Wood, all born in Wendell, were:

1. Samuel Washburn Orcutt, 1811–1899, a wood turner. He married Roxanna Kellogg, sister of the two sisters who married Gad Wyeth's two sons. Samuel and Roxanna went with the Wyeth families to Ohio. (See “Wyeth Family Plot” under “Cemeteries.”)
2. Susannah Harkness Orcutt, 1815–1895. She married Moses Williams in Wendell and is buried in Center Cemetery.
3. David Orcutt, 1817–1818, is buried in Center Cemetery.
4. Anne Macomber Orcutt, 1820–1861, married Isaiah C. Soule II, the gravestone cutter's son (see “Smallpox Cemetery and Isaiah Soule” under “Cemeteries.”) She, too, is buried in Center Cemetery.

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The First Congregational Church of Wendell was formed in 1774. Twelve years earlier, Reverend Abraham Hill, who had been preaching in the Shutesbury church since 1742, contracted to preach four sabbaths a year in private homes in Wendell, often in that of Jonathan Osgood (as seen in Nathaniel Wilder’s recollections). Over his many years of service, Reverend Hill’s relationship with the people – of both Shutesbury and what would be Wendell – deteriorated severely. One bone of contention was that Hill preached only in proportion to the amount of taxes paid. Another was the discovery of Hill’s strongly pro-British political views. The majority of people in Wendell and Shutesbury were patriots who fully supported the colonists’ revolution, but Hill was a royalist. Shutesbury stopped paying Hill, and in the mid-1770s they tried repeatedly to get him to resign – even, at one point, putting him in the public pound and forcing him to survive only on herring thrown over the fence to him. The conflict persisted at a standstill until 1778 when, with the formation of an ecclesiastical council, Hill was run out of both towns. He went
to Brookfield, but absconded with the church’s Bible and records, none of which were ever seen again.\textsuperscript{68}

In 1781, the year of Wendell’s incorporation as a \textit{bona fide} Massachusetts town, a Reverend Billings supplied the people of Wendell with preaching; he was followed the next year by a Reverend Babcock. In 1783, church members, who were still meeting in each other’s homes, began to make provisions for the construction of a 40’ x 55’ meetinghouse, land for which they purchased in 1785 from Jonathan Osgood. As work got under way, arrangements had to be made for paying for lodgings for carpenters from New Salem, reimbursing “Jonathan Crosby for what rum shall be expended,”\textsuperscript{69} and hiring Reverend Joseph Kilburn as their first permanent pastor.

In 1874, on the anniversary of the founding of the church, Reverend W. H. Beaman of Amherst provided some history of the first meetinghouse, which had been built on more or less the same site as the second and current one. By his account, the first winter the meetinghouse was in use, it had only a bare outside covering and a temporary floor. At a town meeting on December 15, the people considered whether to reduce the number of exercises on the sabbath during the winter season due to the cold. Receiving a negative vote, the parishioners complied by assembling twice each Sunday in their frigid, unfinished meetinghouse. Beaman reminded his audience that “stoves were then unknown and so continued for forty-four years.” Completion of the meetinghouse was also a long time coming. In 1784, it was voted to have board window frames for the meeting house and to have forty squares in the lower windows and thirty in the upper ones; one year later the windows had not yet been installed, as seen by a vote to shrink the size of the lower ones by five squares. As late as 1791, with the meetinghouse still unfinished, it was voted that the completion of the work be “let out...by the job, and that the meeting house be ceiled [sic] with boards as high as the tops of the pews below, and as high as the windows in the gallery, and the remainder to be lathed and plastered. The pulpit and the

\textsuperscript{68} There are several accounts of the conflicts between the people and Reverend Hill. Everts and Holland each give one.

\textsuperscript{69} Everts, \textit{History of the Connecticut Valley in Massachusetts}, 485
remainder to be left with the committee.” In 1792, there was a vote to case the posts, to lathe and plaster under the galleries, and to leave the color of the paint up to the committee. Concluding his remarks on the construction of this church, Reverend Beaman said:

*Solomon’s temple was seven years in building. This was about ten. For fifty years after it was finished, it served the people well as a place of worship and municipal business: though plain in all its parts, and never graced with spire, tower or bell.*

Three other items of interest are found in the Wendell Congregational church records. In 1823, the parishioners petitioned the town to meddle no longer in its affairs, and the town obliged, but it ceased also to raise any money for the church; in 1836, it was voted that the bass viol belonging to the parish be held in the care of William L. Bent, “who will keep it in repair;” and in 1837, it was voted that the church fathers notify the selectmen to remove the town’s powder from the meetinghouse.

Church meeting minutes from the 1820s and 1830s show that the subject of building a more comfortable and aesthetically pleasing church came up for discussion often in those years, but it was not until 1846 that the old church “gave place to this more commodious edifice from which sounded forth, for the first time in the history of Wendell, the church-going bell.”

It has often been said that Judge Oliver Wendell gave the church a bell, but – as Beaman’s remarks make clear – such was not the case. In fact, the bell that sits in the bell tower today was cast in 1846, the year the new church was built, by the G. H. Holbrook bell foundry in Medway, Massachusetts. (George Holbrook, once an apprentice to Paul Revere, and his company cast over 11,000 bells, which were sent to all parts of the United States, the British provinces, Mexico, and the Sandwich Islands.) Sawin tells us that Judge Wendell, who did present the Congregational church with a Bible (now lost) and a silver engraved baptismal font (still in the town’s possession), also started a fund for a bell, but that money disappeared over time, and Holbrook’s bell was paid for in full

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70 Beaman, *Centennial Celebration*, 15.
71 Ibid.
by parishioners. A list of those people was found in the church records which, by a stroke of luck, were discovered on sale and purchased from e-Bay several years ago.

A 1980s researcher attributed the design and construction of the 1846 two-story, double entrance, Greek Revival-style church to Luke Osgood Leach (great-grandson of Aaron Osgood), describing him as a “master carpenter,” who may have also built many of the Greek Revival houses around the Common\textsuperscript{72} – houses which resemble the John Sanderson Ward house built by Leach in 1847 in Montague. Sawin credits Leach with two houses on the west side of the Common (one at #11 Wendell Depot Road and the other, now gone, in the field next to it), but he does not name the builder of the new church. Leach was voted in as a trustee of the church in 1840, and there are at least three recorded payments of $100 each to him made by the church in 1847 and 1849; these could have been payments for either labor or lumber, or both. We know that Leach was a lumber manufacturer. When he died in 1898 in Orange, his obituary, oddly enough, made no reference to his working life, saying only that he was twice a member of the Legislature, served for nearly half a century as deacon of the Congregational church, and “went to California for two years in the time of the gold excitement.”\textsuperscript{73} Sawin’s comment on Leach was terse: “Just returned from California. Owns many lots in town. Cuts timber.”

Reverend Noadiah Dickinson, Congregational pastor from 1847 to 1852 as well as a speaker at the church’s 1874 centennial celebration, contributed the following to the story of the second church:

\begin{quote}
For a year or two previous to my settlement, this church had been much depressed. One cause contributing to this was the uncomely and uncomfortable condition of the old house of worship. In the summer of 1846, a most earnest and successful effort was made to rebuild it. The undertaking was a great one for the little company of men and women who carried it out. One man had to bear one-third of the expense. The feebleness of extreme old age does not
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{72} Foster, “Architecture in Wendell, Mass.,” 10-11.

\textsuperscript{73} Vermont Phoenix, Brattleboro, Vermont, March 25, 1898, 9.
allow that man to commemorate with us today events in which he was so prominent an actor...  

In 1846, Wendell, though holding its own, was thirty-one years past its prime, and its population was both aging and beginning to dwindle. Under these circumstances, it was a remarkable act of faith to build a new church. Who was that generous man who bore one-third of its expense? We may never know, but we can hazard a guess. There was only one man in “extreme old age” at the time of the 1874 celebration, a man who also happened to be both wealthy and a dedicated Congregationalist: ninety-year old Samuel Brewer (see his story under “Nathan Brewer and Sons”).

Originally, the church had a steeple, but a bolt of lightning splintered it in the summer of 1924. The building was used continuously as a church until it closed in 1972. The church re-opened in 1981, but closed its doors for good ten years later. At this writing, a concentrated and promising effort is underway to restore the 167-year old meetinghouse. This photograph was found tucked into the pages of an old book of church records. Note the stables at the rear.

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74 Dickinson, Centennial Celebration, 39.
Joseph Kilburn, like so many Wendell settlers, was born in Lancaster where his father, also Joseph and originally from Rowley, Massachusetts, was a church deacon. Joseph II graduated from Harvard in 1777, and was ordained as pastor in Wendell in 1783. The church offered to pay him fifty pounds per year, but he successfully negotiated an annual salary of seventy pounds, supplemented by forty acres of land, an annual delivery of thirty cords of wood, and a promise of a ten pound raise as soon as the number of families in town reached the one hundred mark. Some early friction between the Reverend and his parishioners is suggested by the fact that in 1790 it was voted not to comply with Mr. Kilburn’s request to be dismissed. Once that hurdle was crossed, however, Reverend Kilburn faithfully served his congregation for thirty-two consecutive years until his death.

Soon after arriving in Wendell, Reverend Kilburn bought land from Miss Mary Ann Townsend on the west side of the Common (#11 Wendell Depot Road today), and he built a house there in 1788. (Sawin says that this house was demolished in 1851 and a new one put up in its place by carpenter and deacon, Luke Osgood Leach.) Kilburn married Lydia Baker of Templeton in 1784, and their first child, Mary, was born ten months later. In the ensuing eighteen years, Lydia bore nine more children, six of whom died in childhood. Joseph (1788–1790) and Josepha (1790–1790) died of the “meazles [sic],” another Josepha (1792–1792) died of whooping cough, Eliza (1795–1802) died of “canker rash,” Erva (1801–1804) died of something known as “the rattler” or “suffocative quinsy” (laryngeal diphtheria), and the last child, an unnamed boy born in 1803, lived for only eight hours, his birth apparently the cause of his mother’s death four days later. The names of all seven, carved into one gravestone in Center Cemetery, are poignant reminders of the vicissitudes of life.

These deaths and their causes come from both Wendell’s Vital Records and Reverend Kilburn’s notes.
Of the surviving four children, we know only about the eldest, Mary. In 1805, at the age of twenty, Mary married twenty-seven-year-old Samuel Bent of Barre. In an unusual turn of events, her marriage was followed two days later by that of her father, the Reverend Joseph Kilburn, to her new husband’s older sister, Sarah. Samuel and Mary had four children, the last of whom was a boy born the year Reverend Kilburn died (1816), and they named him Joseph Kilburn Bent. In 1819, Samuel Bent sold land he owned on Locke’s Village Road to Samuel Burgess, the only African-American man known to have lived in Wendell.\(^7^6\) (See “Samuel Burgess.”) Six years later, Samuel and Mary left Wendell for the West. In Pontiac, Michigan, Samuel was baptized and ordained an elder in the Mormon church in 1833, the same year – coincidentally – that Mormon missionaries found their way to Wendell. One year later, on a brief visit back to Wendell, Samuel baptized Caroline Barnes, wife of young Jonathan Crosby III, into the Mormon faith. In 1836, Samuel and Mary were in Liberty, Missouri, but when their Mormon community became a target of persecution, they fled further north, founding the town of Far West, Missouri. Mary died in 1838, and Samuel continued on the Mormon Trail to Utah, where in January 1846 he was “sealed” (married) to five different women. Eight months later, Samuel was dead.

Sawin informs us that in 1816 an epidemic of “spotted fever” (a form of typhus), a disease spread by fleas and lice, hit Wendell and took Reverend Kilburn, Doctor Benjamin Ball, and others down with it. (Dr. Ball’s two sons, also afflicted, survived, but became “deaf-mutes” as a result of the fever. One of them, Danforth Ewers Ball, migrated to Columbus, Ohio, where he taught at a school for the deaf.) Kilburn’s obituary in the *Boston Christian Disciple* is printed here:

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\text{Died – At Wendall [sic], Massachusetts, February 27, the Reverend and amiable Joseph Kilburn, in the sixty-first year of his age and thirty-third year of his ministry – a gentleman highly esteemed through life, and greatly lamented in death. On every occasion he was solicitous to maintain the honor of the Christian character and was sound in the}
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\(^7^6\) Book 43, Page 302, Franklin Co. Registry of Deeds.
faith of the gospel; and while he held to the free and sovereign grace of God in our salvation, he was zealous of good works. In his private life, the gentleman and the Christian appeared to great advantage. He was in his constitution active, and from principle disposed to do good. He was of an affable, condescending and obliging disposition; kind, gentle and friendly to all. By the death of this venerable servant of Christ, religion and humanity have sustained a heavy loss.\textsuperscript{77}

Reverend Beaman, recalling Reverend Kilburn, noted that he was “well-known to have taken moderate views of doctrine... and would, perhaps, have affiliated with the Unitarians had he lived at a later time.”\textsuperscript{78}

Sarah Bent Kilburn survived her husband by twenty-six years, living to the age of seventy-four. She is buried next to him and his first wife in Center Cemetery.

\textbf{Genealogical Note:}
Samuel Bent’s older brother, Joel, born in 1770, also came to Wendell. Sawin says that in 1795 Joel built the house still standing at # 102 West Street. Joel was the father of Mary Mason Bent, who married Deacon Martin Armstrong. The Armstrong family resided at the northern end of West Street in the house built, according to Sawin, by Oliver Wetherbee. A further link between the Armstrong and Bent families was the marriage of Deacon William Lawrence Bent (Joel Bent’s son, b. 1805) to Lucinda Armstrong (b. 1806), a sister of Deacon Martin Armstrong. Deacon William and Lucinda Bent lived at the extreme south end of West Street on property that now belongs to the camp and conference center there.

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\textsuperscript{78} Beaman, Centennial Celebration, 9.
SUBSEQUENT PASTORS
of the Congregational Church

1817–1822: Reverend Henry Wilbur. Born in 1787, he attended Hamilton College while Reverend Azel Backus was its president and later bestowed the middle name of “Backus” upon his first son. Reverend Wilbur, sent to the Wendell Congregational church in 1817 to replace Reverend Joseph Kilburn, served in that capacity for five years. His primary contribution to the Wendell church was the establishment of religious instruction for children. He and his wife, Anna Toppan of Newburyport, had five children, three of whom were born in Wendell: Hervey Backus Wilbur, Ann Toppan Wilbur Wood, and Joshua Green Wilbur; the other two were Edward Payson Wilbur and Charles Toppan Wilbur. Hervey graduated from medical school in 1842 and, eventually, headed up the “State Asylum for Idiots” at Syracuse, New York; Ann became a musician, a French and Italian scholar who translated French authors (including Jules Verne), and an author of poetry and magazine articles, writing under the pen name of “Florence Leigh.” Edward served as a Massachusetts Representative and Senator; and Joshua and Charles became doctors, like their brother Hervey. Charles, after graduating from Harvard Medical College, even followed in Hervey’s footsteps, studying the “feeble-minded” and becoming Superintendent of the State Asylum for the Feeble-Minded in both Illinois and Michigan. Joshua, also a graduate of Harvard Medical College, served as a surgeon in the Civil War and then lived in Brooklyn, New York, where he worked as a medical examiner for life insurance companies. Reverend Wilbur died in Newburyport in 1852.

1823–1830: Reverend John Duncklee. Born in 1793 in Greenfield, New Hampshire, he graduated from Dartmouth and did his

theological studies at Andover Seminary. After his dismissal, he returned with his wife and four children to his hometown where he made his living as a farmer.

1830–1837: Reverend William Claggett. Born in Litchfield, New Hampshire in 1796, he, too, was a Dartmouth graduate. After leaving Wendell, he served as pastor in a variety of other New England communities.

1838–1844: Reverend Salmon Bennett. A Vermont native, born in 1790, he graduated from Middlebury and went on to preach in many places after his time in Wendell.

1847–1852: Reverend Noadiah Smith Dickinson. He was born in Amherst in 1815 and graduated from Amherst College. He studied at Andover, preached in Heath, and was ordained at Wendell. In September 1860, in Taunton, Massachusetts, he preached a sermon on “Slavery: the Nation’s Crime and Danger.” He died of consumption in Jacksonville, Florida, and is buried in Leominster, Massachusetts.

1852–1902: During this time, there was a succession of fifteen different pastors, most serving either one or two year terms before moving on. Reverend John Dodge, who had been a missionary in West Africa, died in the parsonage of typhus in 1863, after only two years as pastor; he was also active in town affairs, especially the school committee. Reverend George Perkins, a former missionary in Turkey, served for three years in Wendell before dying of pneumonia in the parsonage in 1895. Only the Reverend Brainard Bradley Cutler (1803–1893) held the office for a longer period; in 1869, he “accepted a call at Wendell where he remained seven years, a period of comparative rest among a generous people of religious sympathy.”

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82 The information on the Reverends Dodge and Perkins comes from Ed Hines, current resident of the parsonage.

Competing for the new land opening up in western Massachusetts were both settlers and land speculators, men with enough money to buy up large parcels of land solely for investment purposes. In north Shutesbury/south Wendell, two prominent Massachusetts men were the dominant land speculators: Jonathan Jackson of Newburyport and Oliver Wendell, Esq. of Boston. Those invested in south Ervingshire/north Wendell were the heirs of John Erving.

Jonathan Jackson, “born of a family not obscure,” in his words, graduated from Harvard in 1761 and went on to establish himself as a merchant and importer of British goods in Newburyport. He was active in the political affairs of his town as well as his state, serving in the Massachusetts Provisional Congress in 1775, the Massachusetts General Court in 1777, and the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention in 1779. He was also a state representative and senator, and he was appointed first marshal of the United States in 1789. Having lost most of his fortune over the course of the Revolutionary War, he began investing in land to recoup his losses. Later, he took the position of treasurer for both Harvard and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In addition, Jackson was the first president of the Boston Bank, now the First National Bank of Boston.

Oliver Wendell, from a prominent and prosperous family that had relocated from Albany to Boston, was a wealthy judge and the first president of the Union Bank in Boston. Interestingly, he married Jonathan Jackson’s sister Mary. Judge Wendell’s maternal grandparents were Governor Simon Bradstreet and the poet Anne Dudley Bradstreet; and Judge Wendell was himself the grandfather of the famous physician, poet, and philosopher, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. (1809–1894), and great-grandfather to Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. (1841–1935), who served for thirty years as a justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.

From the 1780s through the turn of the century, Wendell and Jackson bought up dozens of large lots of land, all south of the dividing line between Ervingshire and Shutesbury, which they both traded back and forth between themselves and sold to settlers. Jackson, like most of the land speculators, never maintained any kind of a presence in the burgeoning town, but the same does not appear to hold true for Oliver Wendell.

In 1796, Wendell purchased from Captain John Prentice a small lot next to the Congregational meetinghouse at the center of town. The record of this purchase shows a hand-drawn rectangle, labeled “Judge Wendell’s house,” lying close to the road, and Sawin attributes the construction of that house to Captain Prentice. (Fittingly, the Town Offices now stand on this lot.) Exactly how much time Oliver Wendell spent in Wendell is unknown, but, in light of the fact that the town was named in his honor, we can assume that he had a deeper connection to the town than just his real estate interests. Selectmen’s notes from 1786 record a decision to ask Oliver Wendell to procure a chest of firearms for the town’s selectmen, indicating a de facto position as literal “town father.” Also, as we have seen, Judge Wendell made several gifts to the Congregational church. It is possible, too, that ego interests may have been at play: Sawin states that Judge Wendell offered to give money for a church if the people would name their new town “Wendell,” but then strikes that claim, saying that he (Sawin) was mistaken.

Silver christening font given by Oliver Wendell, Esq. to the First Congregational Church in Wendell.

North of the Shutesbury line in Ervingshire, the land speculators were John Erving’s adult children (and some of their spouses),

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almost all of whom inherited many large tracts of land there after Erving’s death, at age ninety-four, in 1786. The names of all his children, with the exception of Abigail Erving Scott, appear as land owners on the 1800 Map (see “Maps”):

1. John, Harvard class of 1747, who married Maria, daughter of Governor William Shirley.
2. Elizabeth, who married the vastly wealthy Governor James Bowdoin. Their son James and their daughter Elizabeth (aka Lady Temple) also inherited some of Erving’s land. (Point of interest: in her later life, Elizabeth Erving Bowdoin became hopelessly addicted to snuff.\(^\text{86}\))
3. Abigail, who married George Scott, governor of the Caribbean islands of Grenada and Dominica.
4. William, who served as a major in the British Army.
5. George, Harvard class of 1757, who was a resident of Great Britain.
6. Ann, who married Duncan Stewart of the British Custom’s Unit.

Interestingly, Oliver Wendell was one of the executors of John Erving’s will; Erving’s sons, John, William, and George, and son-in-law James Bowdoin, Esq., were the others. Bowdoin, for many years, also acted as land agent for his wife’s siblings. For this reason, many early deeds in Wendell bear his name as the grantor of the real estate.

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\(^{86}\) Frank E. Manuel, *James Bowdoin and the Patriot Philosophers*, American Philosophical Society, 2004, 53, [http://books.google.com/books/about/James_Bowdoin_and_the_Patriot_Philosophers.html?id=vZaY5Vxx0q1C](http://books.google.com/books/about/James_Bowdoin_and_the_Patriot_Philosophers.html?id=vZaY5Vxx0q1C)
Because Wendell was home to three generations of Crosby men — all named Jonathan — it is necessary to distinguish between them. Jonathan Crosby I was born in Lancaster in 1746 and came to Wendell, according to Sawin, when he was just twenty-one, in 1767. His forefathers, like those of Reverend Kilburn, had migrated to Lancaster from Rowley. (One genealogist claims to have traced this Crosby family back to a certain Miles Crosby (1483–1538), Royal Archer for King Henry VIII.)

In 1768, Crosby purchased 100 acres “lying near the north road of Shutesbury” and married Esther Osgood, daughter of Aaron Osgood and Eunice White. Esther and Jonathan’s first child, Lois, was born in Wendell in 1769. She was followed by seven more children, including Jonathan Crosby II and a set of twins who died as babies. The date of Crosby’s purchase of 117 acres on what is now Farley Road is unknown, but Metcalf’s 1788 map shows Crosby’s name on that property at that date. According to Sawin, Crosby built a house right on the road, but tore it down around 1800 and replaced it, slightly to the east, with the Cape-style house that stands there today (#132 Farley Road). Over time, Crosby increased his Wendell land holdings, buying some through conventional channels and others at public auction for non-payment of taxes.

From the accounts left to us, it is apparent that the first Jonathan Crosby was an industrious man. A mid-nineteenth century Wendell resident, Joel Johnson, told Sawin that Crosby built a gristmill on Wickett Pond Brook (known today as Mormon Hollow Brook), but that it was out of use “in [Johnson’s] earliest remembrance,” which he dated to about 1780. Johnson also told Sawin that the gristmill’s millstone lay in the brook, and, in

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87 J. Crosby I was actually J. Crosby III, but for clarity’s sake and because he seems to have been the first Crosby to come to Wendell, he will be referred to as Jonathan Crosby I.

88 *Hampshire Abstracts 1663–1786*, Book 4, Page 140, Franklin Co. Registry of Deeds. The location of this property is unknown.
a lovely continuity of history, more than one hundred and sixty years later, it lies there still.

Crosby’s house built circa 1800 (left) and millstone from Crosby’s gristmill in its resting place in Mormon Hollow Brook.

Johnson reported that Crosby built a sawmill — not far from his gristmill — which was in operation from about 1797 to Crosby’s death in 1807. Apparently, Crosby made it a practice to travel to Boston to sell products from his farm and to buy goods he could not produce; rum was one of these. As noted earlier, Crosby was the man who supplied rum to the builders of the first meetinghouse in 1783. It was on one of these buying-and-selling trips that Crosby, aged sixty-one, suffered a fatal injury. Reverend Kilburn’s journal entry for July 31, 1807, says:

Buried Jonathan Crosbee [sic]. He died at Fitchburg on his return from Boston with a loaded wagon by some means falling under one wheel broke the spine of his back and deprived him of sensation but not reason. He expired the third day after this sorrowful accident.⁸⁹

Jonathan Crosby II was born in Wendell in 1778. (A child of the same name had been born into the family in 1777, but he was one of the twins who died as babies.) Jonathan II lived in the homestead built by his father, farmed the land there, and married Lois Barnes of Warwick. They had four children. He did his own carpentry work and some coopering. He earned the title of “Captain,” but in what militia is unknown. Regarding his — and his wife’s — religious leanings, their son, Jonathan III, was later to write:

⁸⁹ Kilburn, Journal.
My father was a Unitarian in principle, but he never said much about religion, never prayed in his family except to ask the blessing on the food and return thanks when done eating. My mother was a very zealous Christian, and used to talk to her boys (only two of us) when we were small... They were very constant meeting-goers and always took their children if they could.\textsuperscript{90}

In 1818, Lois was afflicted with “putrid dysentery”\textsuperscript{91} and died. With four young children to take care of, Jonathan Crosby II hired a housekeeper whom he kept until he married Hannah Osgood in 1827. She was his first cousin and the widow of her cousin John Osgood. Captain Jonathan Crosby died in 1839 and is buried in Center Cemetery in Wendell.

Of Jonathan Crosby III, born in 1807, we know considerably more – owing to his autobiography, various Mormon records, and Sawin’s notes. In 1816, he suffered and survived the spotted fever that handicapped or killed so many in Wendell, and, two years later, he survived the illness that killed his mother. Apart from these diseases, this farmer-carpenter-and-cabinet maker led an uneventful life until he was twenty-six years old, in 1833, a year marked by religious revivals throughout New England. That year, his eighteen-year-old sister Emily caught “a violent cold which settled on her lungs” and kept her in bed for six months before killing her. Jonathan wrote that Emily’s death “affected me so much that I thought I should not live long.” But soon afterwards, an event in Wendell changed the course of Jonathan’s life. On a September evening, having heard that two young Mormon preachers had just arrived in town, Jonathan walked from his father’s home on Farley Road to the Common in order to hear what they had to say. At the end of the night, Jonathan expressed so much enthusiasm for their preaching that the two men, both in their late teens, came looking for him at his father’s house the next morning. His sister, Lois, called him in from the field where he was digging potatoes and, after talking with them for a while, he invited the two to walk with him to Mr. Harris’s house, a mile away. Mr. Harris, in Jonathan’s words,

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.
was a Methodist. He was well-educated, and strong in argument on theological questions. I thought if there was a man in the world that could whip them out, he could do it. This Mr. Harris was tending his mill. I introduced them and Mr. Harris took the Mormon book out, looked it over a moment, [and] asked some questions about it which they answered. He then stopped his mill and invited us into the house. After we were seated, he conversed a while with them, but entered into no argument with them, at which I marveled. And I said to him sometime afterward, “I brought those men to you for you to whip them out in argument.” He said, “They have the truth, and I can’t do it, neither can anyone.” “Well,” I said, “I did not believe you could, but I wanted them tested.” I knew it, their preaching was true, and I rejoiced exceedingly.92

“Mr. Harris” was Elias Harris, who was born in New Salem and lived in Wendell for about a decade. His property, in what we now call Mormon Hollow, contained enough water for him to build a dam and run a sawmill; he also worked as a wagon-maker and a wheelwright. Sometime after his introduction to the two Mormon preachers, he was baptized into their church and became a Mormon Elder. Harris, his wife, and two children lived in South Orange briefly before selling everything and leaving for Nauvoo, Illinois.

As Jonathan’s excitement about Mormonism grew, he was sure that many people in town would join him in adopting it, but the Congregational and Baptist ministers “set against the [two Mormons] and called them false teachers” so that, by the end of the Mormons’ stay in December 1833, only two young men and four young women had “received their teachings.” These young people were Jonathan Crosby, David Nelson, Theresa Merchant, and Mary, Lucy, and Sarah Harris (of no known relationship to Elias Harris). According to one source, Jonathan Crosby preached Mormonism whenever he could, but was often “met with vexation and prejudice.”93 An indication of the difficulties the converts may have faced is illustrated in the following story:

92 Ibid.

A Wendell man and state representative named Luther Stone [owner of the sawmill at the split of Farley and Mormon Hollow Roads] was very hostile to the Mormons. He was said to be about six feet, seven inches, or seven feet tall. The story is that Luther Stone led a party that put a flat stone over the chimney of the home where they were holding meetings, probably the Merchant house [#58 Mormon Hollow Road]. See sidebar.

In the autumn of 1834, Jonathan went to Canada to marry his cousin Caroline Barnes who, upon her return to Wendell with him, was baptized a Mormon by Samuel Bent who was back in town on a short visit. A year later, Jonathan and Caroline made preparations to depart for Kirtland, Ohio, “where the Prophet [Joseph Smith] and Saints were gathered.” Jonathan’s father tried to convince him to stay in Wendell by promising to build an addition onto the family homestead for them, but the young couple’s decision held firm. Jonathan made some improvements to their one-horse wagon, packed up a bed, some clothing, and a few carpentry tools he had either made or “picked up about the neighborhood,” and set off.

Jonathan’s autobiography details the many trials they encountered on their westward journey and reports on their frequent travels back east to do missionary work. On a solo visit to Wendell in 1842, he baptized his siblings, David and Lois, into

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**Luther Stone Smokes Mormons Out of Their Meeting**

This story, whose details I have been unable to verify, was given to the Wendell Post by Harvey Matusow, who lived in both Warwick and Wendell Depot in the 1980s. Mr. Matusow had been a member of the Communist party before becoming an aide to Senator Joseph McCarthy and an informer to both the FBI and the House Un-American Activities Committee. He was jailed for three years for perjury, married a dozen times and, just before moving to the Wendell area, became a Mormon. Mr. Matusow died in 2002 from complications resulting from a car accident. He is buried in Wendell’s South Cemetery.

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94 Ibid.
95 Crosby, Autobiography.
96 Ibid.
the Mormon faith. While he was away, Caroline helped earn a living for the family by teaching school and braiding straw into hats which she sold for fifty cents each. After being baptized, Jonathan’s brother, David Barnes Crosby, went with his wife, Marial Thompson, to join Jonathan and Caroline in Nauvoo, Illinois, where David died at the age of thirty-nine. Just before his death, David partnered with his siblings to sell the family homestead on Farley Road to Chester Leach for $1225 on February 17, 1844. Jonathan’s sister, Lois Barnes Crosby, married Harvey Thompson, brother of Lois’s sister-in-law, Mariel, and went to Illinois with him in the early 1850s, closing the chapter on the Crosby family in Wendell.

In 1850, Jonathan was sent with his family on a three-year mission to the South Sea Islands. Needing money to get to California to board a boat, he sold his house and his carpenter’s shop to Brigham Young, a carpenter by trade. A descendant’s account of the Crosby’s journey to the coast reveals that Jonathan stopped to pan for gold. Furthermore,

> one nugget, which he sold to an assayer, brought him $40 and this helped them on their way to San Francisco. From there being without further means, they relied entirely on the promises made to them by President Young when he said “if they would obey the call, the Lord would provide.” They were given passage free to their destination when the Captain learned they were missionaries, providing they would help load fuel on the return trip of the ship William O. Alden to Maine. On board the ship was a group of French people who had a chest filled with many fine carpenter tools. En route, sailors had gathered many pieces of driftwood and learning that Mr. Crosby was a skilled worker with wood, they offered him their find to make up into anything he wished. The Frenchmen sold him their tools and also bolts of velvet and silk cloth. He soon set to work making beautiful chests, many of them hand carved and with pearls set in the lids. These he lined with velvet. He gave the captain of the ship one of these chests and also a lady’s writing desk for his kindness to himself and his family. He also made and sold walking canes with pearl-like handles and many other articles for which he received
enough money to keep his family while they were on the islands. While laboring as a missionary, Jonathan made many converts. Mrs. Crosby brought two small native boys to Utah with her and they lived in the Crosby home until they were grown.\textsuperscript{97}

Caroline died at age seventy-seven in February 1884, and Jonathan died at eighty-five in June 1892. Both are buried in Beaver, Utah.

Today, there are many misconceptions and speculations about not only the presence of Mormons in Wendell but also the origins of the naming of Mormon Hollow Road. Sawin’s notes set the record straight. In 1857, he interviewed Miss Sally Taft, a seamstress living at what is now #38 Locke’s Village Road, and she gave this vivid account of what she called “the Mormon fanaticism.”

\textit{David Nelson, a Baptist and a chair-maker, on his way home from Athol perhaps, fell in company with two Mormon itinerants and was inveigled by them and invited them to town and to his house. He appointed a meeting in his hall and people came from far and near. Afterwards meetings were held in school houses for several weeks. The clergymen attended a few times and comforted them, but to little fanfare. Some were led away by the strange men

and strange doctrines. The others forsook them. Their rendezvous subsequently was the hollow between Bear Mountain and Benjamin Hill and hence took the name of Mormon Hollow [emphasis mine]. They attempted to heal the sick by faith and even to raise the dead in one or more instances. One was made insane by their fanaticism and was found in a pond naked and wild.

Who was David Nelson? According to a biography of him written by his grandson, David (1801–1882) was the third child of Captain Jonathan Nelson and Eunice Stone of Shrewsbury, Massachusetts. He lived and worked there until he was thirty-one, when he went to Hartford to apprentice with a cousin, employed as a chair painter. In 1832, he was baptized a Baptist and moved to Wendell, where he found employment with his brother Charles in a painting firm that was soon bought out by a company of Baptist brethren called Wythe & Richardson. (“Wythe” may be a misspelling of “Wyeth” because (1) I can find no reference to anyone with the first spelling and (2) it is compelling to think that the Wyeth “painting gene” which emerged in Thomas Sawin’s brothers, cousins of the Wyeths, could have surfaced elsewhere in Wendell – likely via a son of Wendell resident Gad Wyeth.) David Nelson bought an interest in the new company.

Here is David Nelson’s first-hand account of the stories given above by Jonathan Crosby III and Miss Sally Taft about what happened on that fateful September evening in 1833:

...in traveling a short distance in Worcester County, I fell into the company of two young men. Soon learned they were Elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints, their names being Evan M. Green and Horace Cowin, both...from Ohio. They wanted to go to Wendell to preach the gospel according to their faith. I proposed to them I would see the two then ministers of the Gospel, the Baptist and the Presbyterian, who both rejected them. And so did a Mr. Stone, a merchant. Then my brother, C. L. Nelson said they could preach in our house if I had no

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objection; I replied I had none...the house was therefore thrown open to them, and a meeting was held.\(^{99}\)

The Nelson brothers’ house must have been close to the Common because Crosby noted that this meeting was held in the center of town. It may also be surmised that the “Mr. Stone” was Luther Stone, the man accused by Harvey Matusow of smoking out the Mormons’ meeting. David Nelson’s interview continued:

> I was baptized on December 2, 1833, by Elder Horace Cowin, and confirmed by the laying on of hands by E. M. Green and Horace Cowin. Then and there I was ordained a priest...In view of my joining the Church, Messrs. Wythe and Richardson chose to buy me out in the firm. I set my price and they paid me.\(^{100}\)

Mr. Nelson then moved on to Rhode Island and married. He and his wife returned to Wendell for a brief stay in 1836 on their way to Kirtland, Ohio. From there, he eventually made his way to Ogden, Utah, where he was a farmer, a sign painter, and a High Priest until his death in 1882. His brother Charles died there, too.

Of Mormonism in Wendell, Sawin wrote this opinionated summary:

> The not very remote fanatical movement of the Mormons is too lamented not to receive a word of notice. It is indeed

\(^{99}\) Ibid.

\(^{100}\) Ibid.
one of the wonders of our history that as late as 1834 a couple of vagabond lecturers did obtain the hearty belief of some of our citizens in one of the wildest stories ever fabricated, Mohammedism not excepted, and afterward did lead twelve or fifteen of them away to a modern Gomorrah, there to finish more miserably than the poor pagan Indian. The Congregationalists, the Baptists, and the Methodists had each to yield its victims to this monstrous, ridiculous fanaticism. Its name is perpetrated in one of our valleys. [Emphasis mine.]

Sawin appended a list of twenty-five people who left Wendell on the “Mormon Trail.” These were:

Jonathan and David Crosby; Mr. Forrester Harwood, his wife and two children
Mr. Thompson and his wife (David Crosby’s sister)
Lucius Merchants of Benjamin Hill and his sister
Widow Anderson and her adult daughter, Edith
Moses Buss and his wife (nee Richardson) and son
Baptists: David Nelson and his wife; Mason Buss [town clerk, 1839–1843]
Methodists: Elias Harris of South Orange and his wife and 2 children
Sect not known: [Isaac] Fleming, David Drury, Gardener [surname illegible]

Jonathan Crosby’s autobiography makes clear that Sawin’s naming of “David Drury” as one of the men who left Wendell for Nauvoo, Illinois, is an error. The man in question was in fact Joel Drury, the youngest son of Zachariah Drury, another early settler.

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ZACHARIAH DRURY
and his son, Joel Drury, a Mormon Convert

Zachariah Drury, born in Framingham in 1748, came from a family who had emigrated from Sudbury (England) to Boston one hundred years prior to his birth. Family records ascribe a kind of jack-of-all-trades status to Zachariah, identifying him as a millwright, a wheelwright, a blacksmith, and a general mechanic.\(^{101}\) Caught up in the westward fever, twenty-six-year-old Zachariah appears on the list of “Twenty Men Who Founded the First Congregational Church” in Wendell on November 29, 1774. On April 19, 1775, he marched from New Salem on the alarm in Lexington as a private in Captain Ebenezer Goodale’s company of Minute Men. Four years later, he married Ruth Sawyer, a Newbury woman who had moved to Montague. Their first child, Elizabeth, was born three months later (see Note below) at their Wendell home, only to die the following year from a severe scalding. Their second child, Abel, was born in 1781, the same year the town was incorporated, and seven more children followed him. The last was Joel, born in 1797. His mother died when he was three, and his father died when he was six – leaving Joel to be raised by his eldest brother, Abel, and his wife, Hepzibah Austin. When he turned eighteen, he chose to live with Captain Jonathan Crosby and his family.

In 1818, Joel married Tirzah Winters\(^ {102}\) and they had three children: Ruth, Permelia, and Charles. When Jonathan Crosby III returned for a brief visit to Wendell in 1836, he baptized Joel and his family into the Mormon faith. At some later date, all five of them set out on the Mormon Trail. They settled for a while in the Mormon community at Garden Grove, Iowa, before leaving, in May 1851, with twenty-one other families in sixty wagons for Salt Lake. By that time, Joel was fifty-five years old, blind and a cripple, and it is said that he often walked portions of the


\(^{102}\) She was the sister of Amanda Winters who had married Joel’s brother, Needham, in 1808. Both Needham and Amanda died of consumption in Wendell that same year of 1818, leaving their five children orphans.
way holding onto the wagon. Upon their arrival in Utah, the family settled in Springville. There, Joel died of consumption in 1854, and his son died in 1859. The lungs must have been a weak spot in the Drury family as records show that Zachariah Drury and five of his eight children who grew to adulthood all died of consumption. Son Elijah died of smallpox and daughter Esther died of unknown causes. The first-born son, Abel, the healthiest of them all, died of old age, at ninety-four years, in Northfield, Massachusetts.

*Note: In comparing old birth and marriage records, it is not at all uncommon to find the arrival of a child less than nine months after a couple’s marriage date. That being so, it bears some mention. Research shows that in the latter half of the eighteenth century “the prebridal pregnancy rate rose dramatically. At peak years between 1760 and 1800, one-third to one-half of all recorded legitimate first births were the result of premarital sexual intercourse in several New England towns where the same measure was one-tenth or one-twentieth in the seventeenth century.”

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Another line of Wilders, one which seems to be unrelated, at least in any proximate way, to Bezaliel Wilder begins, for these purposes, with Silas Wilder. Because he was one of the founding fathers of the Wendell Congregational Church in 1774, he was obviously in residence in Wendell by at least that date, perhaps earlier. Historian Everts claimed that a Silas Wilder – with others – settled near Wickett Pond “shortly after” 1754.\textsuperscript{105} If this were true, Silas would have been only seven years old at the time and would have been accompanied by his parents, Jonathan Wilder and Zerviah Houghton, but there is no evidence that these two ever came to Wendell. It seems that Everts was mistaken on two counts: that Silas Wilder settled in town around 1754 and that the first settlers built their homes near Wickett Pond. Sawin says the earliest houses, those of the Osgoods in particular, were built in or very near to the center of town while the Wickett Pond houses were built a few decades later. Additionally, Sawin locates the house of Silas Wilder I as having been at the northernmost end of the Common (site of #24 Center Street today) and gives its date of construction as 1776.

The story that emerges goes like this: Jonathan and Zerviah Wilder gave birth to Silas Wilder I in Lancaster in 1747. Silas married Elizabeth Sawyer in 1769 and their son, Silas Wilder II, was born in Lancaster in 1770. When Silas II was still a toddler, Silas and Elizabeth moved to Wendell. They helped found the First Congregational Church in 1774 and built their house on the Common in 1776. In 1781, Silas and Lieutenant Luke Osgood were chosen as a committee of two “to procure the continental clothing” for the Wendell men going off to fight in the Revolutionary War.\textsuperscript{106} Sometime in the next few years, Silas and Elizabeth returned to Lancaster, as demonstrated by Silas Wilder’s name being listed on the Lancaster census – and not on the Wendell census – of 1790. He died there in 1833, and she

\textsuperscript{105} Everts, History of the Connecticut Valley, 783.
\textsuperscript{106} Beaman, Centennial Celebration, 22.
followed him four years later. Silas Wilder II married Elizabeth “Betsy” Mason in 1794 and they returned to Wendell where he had lived as a child, building a house at the end of Davis Turn Road. In 1796, Silas II accepted three shillings per week from the town to care for Ruth Tyrer’s two young daughters (see “James Tyrer”). One year later, Elizabeth died – likely due to complications in giving birth to Silas Wilder III who was born in November 1797 in Wendell. In 1799, Silas married Ann (aka Amy) Kidder, and they are listed along with a little boy on the 1800 Wendell census. Although unnamed on the census, this boy was certainly Silas Wilder III who grew up to marry Katy Osgood (daughter of Luke Osgood and Hannah Crosby), to build a house next to his father’s on Davis Turn Road, to raise ten children (one of whom they named Aaron Osgood Wilder), and to become a deacon of the church in 1837. He was also town treasurer from 1827 to 1839. (An 1823 town warrant listed Silas Wilder as “surveyor of lumber,” but it is not known if that man was the father or the son.) Both Silas II and Silas III eventually left Wendell and went – contrary to most others – back east to Sterling where Silas II died of “dropsy” (edema) in 1850 and Silas III died in 1880.

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Benjamin Glazier, another founding father of Wendell’s First Congregational Church, was born in Lancaster in March 1750. He was one of the ten children of Benjamin and Lydia Dakin Glazier. In 1776, he married Elizabeth Pepper, daughter of Joseph Pepper\textsuperscript{107} of Brookfield, and at an unspecified date, probably sometime before his marriage, Glazier purchased a fifty-nine-acre tract of land, just north of Henry Sweetser’s property, on which he put up a small homestead. This property lay about one-third of the way down the now discontinued road that ran from Bear Mountain Road all the way to the Millers River. The house stood at a point where the road forks, the right fork hooking back up with the main road only a few hundred feet later. At this writing, there is only the slimmest suggestion of a house having been there: a pile of stones that could have been the chimney and the barest outline of what were, possibly, the footings.

Benjamin Glazier’s wife, Elizabeth, born about 1745, gave birth to her first child, Obadiah Glazier, in Wendell in 1777. She may have also borne a son, Benjamin II, in 1779 and a daughter, Melinda, in 1780. Elizabeth died in Wendell in 1782 of an unknown cause (because such things were not generally recorded at that time), but given her age and the birth dates of her other children, childbirth was the likely culprit. It appears that Benjamin then returned to his wife’s hometown of Brookfield for a few years before marrying Lydia Cummings of New Salem about 1788 because, when he sold his Bear Mountain property in May 1789 to Edmund Stiles of Wendell, he is referred to as “Benjamin Glazier of Brookfield.”\textsuperscript{108} Benjamin and Lydia moved to Montague, where their first child, Reuben Foster Glazier, was born in 1789. Their second child was also born in Montague, but the family was back in Wendell for the births of their third and fourth children. In the late 1790s, Benjamin Glazier and his family relocated

\textsuperscript{107} Joseph Pepper built a house in 1790 at the far end of Bullard Pasture Road; Sawin says his house was the second on the left heading south after the left-hand turn that ends up at #114 Locke’s Village Road.

\textsuperscript{108} Book 3, Page 43, Franklin Co. Registry of Deeds.
again, this time to Leverett. The census information suggests that Glazier may have had as many as nine children by his two wives, but this cannot be verified.

Edmund Stiles, the man who bought Glazier’s fifty-nine acres for two hundred pounds in 1789, was born in Boxford in 1740, one of the ten children of Benjamin Stiles (b. 1716) and Elizabeth Foster. Edmund married Elizabeth Preston in Boxford in October 1763, and their first child, Phinehas, was born there five months later. Their second child, Elizabeth, was born in 1765 in Shrewsbury, suggesting that Edmund and Elizabeth had already begun their move west. The year in which they arrived in Wendell is unknown, but in the 1789 deed transferring property from Glazier to Stiles, Edmund is referred to as “Edmund Stiles of Wendell,” showing that he had already been living in town for some time. In 1789 also, Edmund was elected to the Board of Selectmen, a position he maintained until 1792. In 1814, a few months before his death, Edmund sold thirty of his Bear Mountain acres to his son, Phinehas, for $400. The text of that deed begins this way: “I, Edmund Stiles, am selling the north half of the lot I bought from Joseph Pepper.” There is no record, however, of any such real estate transaction between Stiles and Pepper, but Joseph Pepper was the father of Benjamin Glazier’s first wife, Elizabeth Pepper. It may be that Joseph Pepper financed Glazier’s purchase of the Bear Mountain property, thus explaining Edmund’s remembering Pepper – rather than Glazier – as the one who sold him his property. After Edmund died, Elizabeth went to live in Fitzwilliam, New Hampshire, with her daughter, her daughter’s husband, Timothy Blodgett of Wendell, and their nine children.

Phinehas Stiles, Edmund and Elizabeth’s son, married Hannah Delvee of Warwick in Wendell in January 1796, and their first child, Fanny, was born six months later. Phinehas followed in his father’s footsteps by becoming a Wendell selectman in 1801–1802. Those early years of the new century were difficult ones for him: in 1802, his two-year-old son, Samuel, died; in 1803, five-year-old Nancy died; and then in 1805, Hannah died, leaving Phinehas a widower and Fanny an only child. (Samuel,

Nancy, and Hannah are all buried in Center Cemetery.) Fanny grew up in Wendell, and in 1829 married the Stiles's neighbor's son, Nathaniel Johnson (his parents were Nathaniel Johnson and Zerviah Crosby, sister of Jonathan Crosby I). Fanny and Nathaniel had two children in Wendell in 1830 and 1832, and then they left for Jericho, New York. A year after his wife's death, Phinehas married Abigail (Nabby) Fisher, and they named their only daughter, Hannah, in memory of his first wife. Phinehas became the first superintendent of the sabbath school run by the Congregational church. Nabby Fisher Stiles died in Wendell in October 1828. Then on New Year's Eve, 1835, Phinehas married his third wife, Esther Hurd, in Northfield where, exactly one year later, on December 31, 1836, Phinehas died at age seventy-one.

Edmund had a younger brother, Benjamin Stiles II (b.1750), who also settled in Wendell. He married Elizabeth Cutler, and both their first child and their first house in Wendell came into being in 1775. Sawin's Map IV shows that Benjamin built a house mid-way down Old Stage Road, on its west side, and that he subsequently moved the house into an orchard across the street. (Today, the remains of his property – which was once a significant one – include a large cellar hole, two wells, and the footings for a barn and several other outbuildings deep in the woods off an abandoned stretch of Old Stage Road.) It is possible that Edmund and Hannah lived with Benjamin and Elizabeth until they purchased Glazier's property in 1789. In the minutes of the first town meeting (1781), copied by Sawin, Benjamin Stiles is named as both highway surveyor and surveyor of boards and shingles. In 1788, he was a selectman. Benjamin has also been described by Holland as the principal carpenter in Wendell in the town's early years. Sawin adds to this depiction by saying that an old house on Sawin's father's farm, taken down before Sawin's father purchased it in 1815, was built by "Father Stiles." Stiles' occupation is reiterated in the following story told by Sawin:

One time, Mr. Stiles (the old carpenter) was aroused by a terrible noise in his houseyard. On opening his door, his six sheep were near [and] his dog was just behind – it was common to have great and powerful watch dogs – and

110 Holland, History of Western Massachusetts, 457.
behind the dog was a large wolf. Not choosing to go out, he left the two to fight it out and after a terrible contest, the wolf retired.

Benjamin and Elizabeth Stiles had seven children in Wendell between 1775 and 1788, but Hannah (1786–1850) may be the only one who made her life here; she died single and without issue and is buried in Center Cemetery. Ezekiel (b. 1784) married Polly King (see “Reverend Samuel King”) and they buried their three-year old son, Benjamin D. Stiles, in Center Cemetery before emigrating to Waterloo, Wisconsin. Silas went to Milford, Wisconsin, and Sullivan left Wendell for Denmark, New York. Elizabeth went to Stone Mills, New York, but of Benjamin III and Catherine, nothing is known. “Father Stiles” died in 1821, and his wife, Elizabeth, died in 1824, and both are buried in Center Cemetery.

Foster Stiles, an older brother of Edmund and Benjamin, was born in 1732 and given his mother’s maiden name. Like Edmund, Foster had associations with Brookfield. In 1764, he married Lydia Abbott of that town and then came to New Salem where he bought land on the New Salem-Wendell line, several hundred yards east of what would later be called the “Smallpox Cemetery.” In 1777, Foster Stiles enlisted in Captain Ebenezer Goodale’s Company which marched to join the Continental Army, but they were discharged a month later, 110 miles from home. Of Foster Stiles, nothing else is known at this time except that he is buried in a small, stone-walled plot on the land he purchased in 1764. His slate gravestone there says “In memory of Mr. Foster Stiles, who died February 27, 1811, aged 77 years. N.B. Mr. Stiles chose this place to be buried several years before he died” – which seems a strange thing to inscribe on a burial stone unless it was meant to put peace to any disagreement his survivors may have had about the choice of his resting place. He is joined there in the deep shade of an old pine tree by only one other family member, a grandson perhaps: Daniel Stiles, born 1795, died 1851.

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Much of the following information was compiled and posted on several online sites by researcher Nancy Poquette. In Sawin’s notes, he spells Tyrer’s name “Tirah,” letting us hear his Boston accent which he received from his Cambridge-raised parents.

James Tyrer was born in 1754 in either Scotland or Devon, England. During the Revolutionary War, he came to Canada in May 1777 with British Major-General John Burgoyne’s army of some six thousand men. Burgoyne and his troops marched south with the intent of capturing Albany, but when his campaign plans failed five months later, he and his men surrendered at Saratoga.

What led Tyrer to settle in Wendell is not known, but on 21 October, 1779, he purchased his first piece of land in town from a Manassah Powers, not far from where the Sawin family would settle thirty-five years later. It was a thirty-one-acre tract, shown as Lot #29 in Capt. Nathaniel Dwight’s “Gentlemen’s Plan.” (Today that land sits between Cooleyville, Jennison, and Rush Roads.) In February 1780, James Tyrer married Ruth Goodale of New Salem. Their first two children were born in 1781 and 1782. In 1782, he added to his property by buying, again from Manassah Powers, ten acres off of adjacent Lot #30. He was, however, a man of little wealth. See Appendix II for the comparative value of his personal property and real estate. In 1786, he was among a number of men who asked the town for a tax abatement. Then, in 1791, he sold his property to Silas Gates (the same Gates whose wife later sold property to Sawin’s father) at a considerable financial loss and bought a seventy-two-acre section of Lot #56 just north of Wickett Pond, abutting what was later to be the Nathan Brewer property (and, later still, the Marion Herrick property). This purchase must have strapped him financially because land records show that only one year later James Tyrer mortgaged that real estate with James Houghton.

By that time, James and Ruth had added five more children to their family: James (b. 1783), Rhoda (b. 1786), Asa (b. 1788), Luther (b. 1789), and Ruth II (b. 1791). But, six months after their eighth and last child, William, was born in January 1793, tragedy struck. Here is Reverend Kilburn’s account:

*July 23, 1793: Buried James Tyrer, aged 39, accidentally killed by a wound under his left arm near his body by a scythe he was carrying home Saturday evening after dark – his body long undiscovered till Monday morning. He has left a widow and eight children, five too young to be sensible of their fatherless condition.*

Ruth’s dower’s share amounted to only fourteen-and-a-half acres of land and a few personal possessions. Probate records contain the following list of household and farm items that James owned at his death. Ruth was allowed to keep those marked with an asterisk; the rest presumably were sold to pay off debts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Marked with an Asterisk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 pine table</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some drilling tools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 chairs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pickax</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 spinning wheel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 sledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 pewter plates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pail</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 pewter basin</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 fire shovel</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 tin dipper</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 grindstone</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 iron skillet</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 pincers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 small dish kettle</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 hammer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 broken kettle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 loom &amp; tackling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 axes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pair of compasses</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 stave</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2 augurs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 plow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 hog</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 scythe &amp; tackling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(was this, perhaps, the scythe that killed James?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pine case of drawers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(still owned by descendants living in Mineral Point, Wisconsin)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a quantity of grain</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

There exists also a fairly long list of names of men who presented claims against James’s estate. These include Jonathan Houghton for the mortgage on the property, the town of Wendell for back
taxes, Peter Leach for making James’s coffin, Samuel Osgood, Jr. for digging James’s grave, and many others for unspecified reasons. Strikingly absent from this list is a bill from a gravestone carver. Although there is no Tyrer tombstone in Wendell, it is likely that James was buried in Wendell’s Center Cemetery next to the Congregational church because Reverend Kilburn of that church was the pastor presiding over James’s burial service and also because that was the only cemetery in town at that date. (The only other possibility is that Tyrer was interred in one of the unmarked graves at “Mormon Hollow Cemetery,” however it is unlikely that Reverend Kilburn would have officiated at a funeral service there or that Ruth would have had any reason to choose that site over the town burying ground.) If Tyrer is indeed buried at Center Cemetery, his grave was probably marked with a simple wooden cross or plaque that has disappeared over time.

After the death of her husband, widow Ruth Goodale Tyrer hit hard times. In 1794, Judge Joshua Green was appointed guardian of all the Tyrer children. Whether Green cared for the children himself or found another home for them is unclear, but at the 1796 town meeting it was voted to put up two of her children “at vendue.” This was a means by which the town took care of those among them who could not care for themselves: room and board for each individual was auctioned off to the lowest bidder with the town paying the bid amount as well as any extraordinary costs, such as those incurred by sickness. At that meeting, ten-year-old Rhoda Tyrer was “struck off” to Abner Allen for one shilling per week and five-year-old Ruth Tyrer II went to Dille Whitcomb for two shillings per week (see mention of Dille Whitcomb under “John Metcalf”). At the end of eight months, the aid was extended, with the town agreeing to pay Silas Wilder three shillings per week for both girls.

Three years later, Ruth Tyrer remarried. She and Elisha Washburn of Ervingshire filed their intentions to wed in November 1799, and six-and-a-half months later Ruth gave birth to their first and only child, Eliza West Washburn. Presumably, Rhoda and Ruth II were returned to the family fold when Ruth married Elisha. He had been a private in the Revolutionary War, marching on the alarm of April 19, 1775. War records describe him as being
five feet, ten inches tall, with black or dark hair. He is mentioned in the town records as having negotiated the lease of Lot #27, a 120-acre gift to the town, intended for use as a “school lot,” from William Erving, Esq., free from all taxes, for a term of 987 years ![1] at an annual rental fee of $32.34 in gold or silver.

While Ruth may have thought that with a new marriage her problems were behind her, such was not to be the case. Ruth and Elisha’s marriage was a short one, terminating with his death in June 1803, which left her a two-time widow with nine children. In August of that year, according to Wendell church records and for reasons we can only guess at, “widow Ruth Washburn was received to full communion in the First Congregational Church.” And in December, the trustees of Lot #27 – Joshua Green, Esq., Nathan Brewer, and David Whitaker – reclaimed possession of the 120 acres for five years’ non-payment of rent. It appears, however, that in January 1804, Ruth’s brother, James Goodale, Gentleman of New Salem, came to the rescue and reversed that decision by acting as surety for Rufus Washburn, Elisha’s son by a first marriage, who had taken over his father’s property. Rufus was both Ruth’s stepson and her son-in-law, having wed Ruth’s daughter Mary.

On February 13, 1804, eight months after Elisha’s death, Ruth filed her intention to marry Ebenezer Johnson, a Wendell man who had also lost his first two spouses. The following year, Ebenezer bailed out Ruth’s stepson Rufus by purchasing the 987-year lease of Lot #27 from him for $260. In 1806, Ebenezer sold eighty acres of land (the north parts of settling lots numbers 2 and 9) to Martin Hager for $1,350 (see “Martin and Charles Hager”). The last mention of Ruth in Wendell was in 1812, when Ruth sold the rights to Lot #27 back to the town for $400. Here the facts become murky. Ebenezer seems to have died prior to this sale, perhaps in Moretown, Vermont, where Vital Records show that on January 9, 1811, Ruth Johnson of Wendell and William Harris of Moretown filed their intentions to marry. Ruth would have been fifty-six years old at this time, and this fourth marriage is the final public record of events in her life. Even the year and place of her death remain a mystery, but various clues suggest that it occurred between 1815 and 1820, probably in Vermont.
What is certain is that Ruth Goodale-Tyrer-Washburn-Johnson-Harris experienced a challenging and often painful life, but she seems – if we can take the liberty of inference – to have met the difficulties with resourcefulness and resiliency.

Genealogical Note:
Ebenezer Johnson, Ruth’s third husband, had a son (by his first wife) named Ebenezer Johnson II (b. 1782). He married Jane Osgood, daughter of early settler Captain Josiah and Jane Boynton Osgood.

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Sawin’s notes say that the first roads in Wendell date to 1756. One was the east-west road going from Montague to New Salem. The other came north from Locke’s Pond (now Lake Wyola), ran for a bit along what is now Jennison Road, then turned up Locke Hill Road (which Sawin calls “Shutesbury Old Road”), and went as far as Bezaliel Wilder’s place just north of the modern intersection of Locke’s Village Road with Locke Hill Road. The year 1756 also marked the establishment of a piece of Wendell Depot Road/Locke’s Village Road running south from Aaron Osgood’s place (slightly north of the current Kemsley Academy) through the Center to a point just past the Common where the road stopped. Ten years later, in 1766, these two pieces of Locke’s Village Road were connected.

Some later roads, dated by Sawin, are given below with their modern names. Note that the dates usually refer to the years the roads were “accepted” by the town, meaning that they had already been in use for a while.

1770: Rush Road over Orcutt Hill, but not connecting with New Salem Road.

1782: The Northfield Road running from the center due north to the Millers River and across it to Northfield. Part of this road became Wendell Depot Road, and the rest of it was discontinued. Today, a row of boulders on Wendell Depot Road between Stone and John Quist Roads marks the entrance to the discontinued section of this road.

1786: (1) West Street and (2) Bullard Pasture Road and (3) the now discontinued road that ran east from the end of Bullard Pasture Road to Locke’s Village Road.

1788: Gate Lane. This road may have originally been called Gage Lane because Nathan and Betsy Boynton Gage lived there with their son David Boynton Gage for many decades in the 19th century. David Gage was a harness-maker and a shoe-maker whom Sawin decried as “a libertine...bold and base.” The basis for this judgment may have been David’s four marriages, the last two of...
which were to women not even half his age. Gage also had his name legally changed to David Boynton Harris in 1847. He died in 1861, taking the more intimate details of his life with him.

1789: Farley Road going from Jonathan Crosby’s place down to the Millers River; at this date, Farley Road was an extension of Stone Road and did not connect to Wendell Depot Road.

1792: section of Laurel Drive from Wickett Pond west to Damon Camp Road.

1795: section of Farley Road going east from Jonathan Crosby’s place to Wendell Depot Road.

1796: Bear Mountain Trail running northeast from Farley Road to Sweetser’s property and then north down to the Millers River; the long section heading due north to the river (on which Edmund Stiles had his home) was discontinued in 1826.

1797: Thompson Road from Farley Road over Bear Mountain to the Millers River; this road was discontinued in 1846.

1798: (1) Damon Camp Road and (2) the continuation of Laurel Drive to Montague Road.

1801: (1) the short section of Locke’s Village Road between West Street and its intersection further south with Jennison Road and (2) Wickett Pond Road from Samuel Brewer’s place (#54 Montague Road) west to the pond.

1806: (1) Old Egypt Road and (2) Wickett Pond Road from the pond south to Montague Road.

1807: Wren Gould Road.

1819: Davis Turn Road.

1826: an extension added to Montague Road on the Montague line running to the northwest (past the current State Forest Headquarters); the old Montague Road ran more westerly over to Dry Hill and was discontinued in the 1840s.

1829: a section of New Salem Road starting from its intersection with Morse Village Road and running north.
1837: (1) the continuation of Rush Road north to Morse Village Road (now discontinued) and (2) the continuation of Locke’s Village Road from Locke Hill Road south to West Street.

Reverend Beaman, speaking in 1874, said that “in looking over the [early] records [of the town], one is impressed with the apparently interminable labor and expense on the survey, construction and repair of roads.” A dozen or so town warrants from the 1820s and 1830s in the town’s historical collection support the veracity of Reverend Beaman’s statement. For example, an 1822 town meeting discussion centered around Gardner Leach’s request that a “highway” be built from the East School house to the North County Road (New Salem Road); another item that year was to see what means the Town would adopt to repair roads damaged by rain. In 1826, at issue was what sums of money were to be raised to fund road repairs. In 1831, the town heard Reuben Commins’ request for the construction of a road from his house at the end of Old Egypt Road (see “Reverend John C. Ball”) to Leverett, and an item discussed at an 1833 town meeting focused on what measures the town would take for opening the roads when they became blocked with snow.
REVOLUTIONARY WAR

Nearly one hundred years after the War of Independence, Reverend Beaman delivered a speech on the histories of the church and the town at the centennial celebration of Wendell's First Congregational church. The words he addressed to the crowd gathered before him conveyed a sense of the spirit of that earlier time:

*When that little band of twenty men formed this church, our country was on the eve of revolution. The political heavens were gathering darkness. Our mother England – not an alma mater – was concentrating her forces in the heart of our province. In less than two months from the organization of this ecclesiastical body, the first blood of freedom was shed, at Lexington, the very spot where some of these settlers were born; shed, too, by some of their nearest kinsmen (Parker and Monroe).*

*Those men and women of [17]74 had peculiar reason, from the first, to feel patriotic; and they were not slow to demonstrate that feeling. A number of them (I know not how many) were in the army; and all held themselves ready, as “minute men,” to take arms, and march to the scene of danger. Within the recollection of some present today, there were five men in the southeast part of town...who were revolutionary pensioners, *viz:* Lient. Samuel Orcutt, Nathaniel (called Hemlock) Wilder, Capt. Zedediah Fisk, Esquire, Samuel Reed and Jacob (called Judge) Harwood.*

Standing next to the bandstand on the town Common today are several stones commemorating Wendell men who served in our “modern” wars, but we have no war memorials for those who fought in the Revolutionary War and the Civil War. Gravestones, genealogical research, and Reverend Beaman’s 1874 Historical Discourse have revealed the names of at least some Wendell men who served as soldiers in the War of Independence. Biographical details for most of these men are provided under their family names in this book, but – for those not elsewhere mentioned – the list below gives some personal data:

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[^113]: Beaman, Centennial Celebration, 21.
1. Aaron Osgood II (b. 1732), son of the first settler of north Wendell, served as captain of the 7th Company, Hampshire County Regiment. (As noted earlier, Franklin County was not formed until 1811.)

2. Captain Zedediah Fiske was born in Wendell and was a first cousin of Jonas Fiske who built the family homestead at Fiske Pond. (See both “Henry Sweetser” and “Fiske Family.”) Sawin tells us that he

\[w\]ent into the continental army before the age of sixteen in 1778 and continued [in it] until the end of the war. [He] was in the 1st platoon that entered NY after the British army left. [He] never saw such a scene of rejoicing. The houses [were] all covered with people who welcomed the American troops. The scenes he witnessed and heard described of British cruelty made him always very bitter against them.

3. Lieutenant Samuel Orcutt was a blacksmith. (See “Orcutt Brothers.”)

4. Josiah Ballard, son of Daniel Ballard who owned and operated Ballard Tavern on Jennison Road, was only sixteen when he enlisted in 1777. He fought his first fight under Ethan Allen at Ticonderoga. (See “Daniel Ballard.”)

5. Nathaniel “Hemlock” Wilder lived to be Wendell’s oldest man, dying at one hundred years and two days. (See “Bezaliel Wilder and his Descendants.”)

6. Samuel Reed was born in Cummington, Massachusetts, in 1760. He, too, was in his teens when he enlisted. After the war, he came to Wendell. At that time, he told Sawin, the only houses on the Common were those belonging to Deacon Jonathan Osgood, John Prentice, and Reverend Kilburn. He lived in as many as fifteen or twenty different places in town and was for many years both constable and tax collector. He died in his nineties in 1854.

7. Jacob (“Judge”) Harwood was born in Shutesbury in 1761. Later that year, his parents moved to New Salem (his father, Absalom, was from Salem). After his service as a private in the war, Jacob returned to New Salem and married Lydia Felton in 1782. He started receiving his
pension in 1833 and died in 1845 in New Salem. Why he was called “Judge” and when he lived in Wendell are questions that have not yet been answered.

8. Oliver Dresser, born in Rowley in 1737 and died in Wendell in 1809, served as a private in Capt. Moore’s Company, Lt. Col. Hallet’s Regiment in 1780. Sawin says Dresser built a house on the east side of the old Northfield Road; that cellar hole is there today.

9. Without first names, Beaman’s “Parker” and “Monroe” are difficult to research. However, in 1787 Oliver Dresser’s son, Aaron, married Abigail Parker Monroe. She was the daughter of Philip Monroe and Abigail Parker of Wendell, and she was the great-granddaughter of William Munroe (1625-1717) who appears to have been among the hundreds of Scottish men who were taken as prisoners of war at the Battle of Worcester (England) in 1651 and shipped to the colonies to be sold as indentured servants. William “Munro” began his indenture in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and, against the odds, through hard work and real estate acquisition, he died one of the most respected men in Lexington.114 The Parkers were a well-respected family from Lexington, Massachusetts, and many generations of its men were carpenters.

10. Captain Henry Sweetser was one of the very early settlers and founders of the church. (See “Captain Henry Sweetser.”)

11. Aaron Fisher, born in Dedham in 1758, served at the Lexington Alarm when only seventeen years old. A few months later, he was a Sergeant stationed at Fort Ticonderoga. He enlisted again in 1778, aged twenty, describing himself as a husbandman, 5’8” tall, with reddish hair and gray eyes. When his service ended, he moved to Wendell where he married Rebecca “Betty” Moore of Lancaster in 1781. The wooden canteen he carried in the Revolution, carved with his initials and the date “October 18, 1778,” along with his flint-lock musket,

were in the possession of his grandson James Clark of Athol in 1898.115 Aaron I, his wife, and his son, Aaron II, were among the charter members of the Baptist church of Wendell founded in 1799. Aaron II died in 1809 (age twenty-six), Betty died in 1836 (age seventy-eight), and Aaron I died in 1843 (age eighty-five). All are buried in Center Cemetery.

12. Captain John Prentice, born in Cambridge in 1753, was a farmer, merchant, and trader first in New Salem and then in Wendell. He participated in the Battle of Lexington and other Revolutionary War battles. He married Mary Ann Kendall Cook, daughter of the first minister of New Salem and widow of Captain James Cook II, who died at Ticonderoga. Captain Prentice was an intimate friend of Governor James Bowdoin and named his only son “Henry Bowdoin Prentice.” John Prentice sold his house and land at the center of town to Oliver Wendell in 1796. He was, however, town moderator in 1802 (as he had been in 1791), according to Sawin, which means that he continued to live in town after selling to Judge Wendell.

13. Brothers Jonas and Joseph Locke (see “Jonas, Joseph and Ebenezer Locke”).

14. Zachariah Drury (see the account under his name).

At the first town meeting after Wendell’s incorporation, the citizens voted “to raise 72 pounds of hard money to procure our proportion of continental beef [food for the soldiers]” and by a vote six weeks later it was agreed “to pay the men raised by Captain Sweetser, out of the town’s money, the value of sixteen bushels of rye, and twenty shillings of hard money, a month, so long as they shall be engaged in the service.”116 It was at this meeting that the town voted “to choose a committee of two men to procure the continental clothing.” As noted previously, these men were Lieutenant Luke Osgood and Silas Wilder.

116 Beaman, Centennial Celebration, 21-22.
Sawin adds that “during the war of separation, the people made commendable exertions in raising men and means and sympathy with the suffering country. Not only were the wages of the soldiers paid, but a bounty given, clothing and food provided and in some cases the land of the volunteers was cleared and their families helped in their absence.” (Note: This short paragraph is almost identical, word for word, to a paragraph found in the Wendell section of Holland’s *History of Western Massachusetts* which was written around the same time Sawin was making his notes; this fact supplies one more clue that Holland received his information on the history of Wendell from Sawin.)

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The list of twenty men who founded the First Congregational Church includes the name of John Wetherbee (who was actually John Wetherbee IV). Sawin claims that John was among the earliest settlers of Wendell, having arrived in 1763. At the first town meeting he, along with Nathan Brewer and Lot Paine, was elected tything-man of the town. He shows up on the 1771 Valuation List as owning a dwelling house, one acre of pasture land, two acres of tillage land, five acres of English mowing land, one cow, one horse, and one swine; in that year also, he produced twenty bushels of grain and three tons of English hay. John’s name appears again on the 1783 Valuation List and his net worth at that time reveals him to have been a man of modest means. (See Appendix II.)

Oliver Wetherbee, born in 1743 in Stow, Massachusetts, was a first cousin of John Wetherbee. When he was nineteen, he married Rachel Willard of Harvard. After the 1763 birth of their first child, Rachel (who would later marry Dr. Daniel Porter, one of Wendell’s first physicians), the family moved to Shutesbury, where Oliver purchased property and built a house at what is today #32 West Street in Wendell. Rachel bore at least ten more children there. Oliver served the town as a constable in 1771 and, at some point, as highway surveyor. According to Sawin, in 1782 Wetherbee replaced his house with the one standing there today. (After Wetherbee, the house was owned consecutively by Elijah Stone, Eliab Stone, and Martin Armstrong. In the early 1900s,
it suffered substantial fire damage and was then rebuilt.) The Valuation List of the following year makes it clear that Oliver was financially successful.

When Revolutionary War veteran Daniel Shays and his followers decided, in 1786, to rebel against the Massachusetts government not only for the heavy tax burden Governor Bowdoin had imposed on the people to pay back debt incurred in the Revolutionary War but also for political corruption and cronyism, the town fathers of Wendell took a stand against the uprising. In Wendell, Josiah Osgood and Oliver Wetherbee were both captains, but Osgood was on the side of the Commonwealth. Wetherbee’s Lieutenant was John Needham, a Wendell tavern-keeper. Some of the soldiers under Wetherbee, according to Sawin, were Daniel and Samuel Rand, Nathaniel and Joseph Johnson, Noah Porter (uncle of Oliver’s son-in-law Dr. Daniel Porter), Thomas Atherton, Lemuel Leach, James Tyrer (who would die five years later by his own scythe), Samuel Orcutt (the blacksmith), and Joseph Stevens. Sawin makes it clear that, the town’s position notwithstanding, there were many men in town – half, he says – who sided with the rebels. This is in keeping with the findings of historian Leonard Richards, who includes Wendell in a list of the ten most rebellious towns in Massachusetts at the time. In January 1787, when Shays and 1,800 other rebels (from all walks of life, not just poor farmers) marched to the US Arsenal at Springfield, where they planned to procure arms, they discovered the government’s militia already occupying the Arsenal and things quickly turned chaotic. Government forces fired on the mob that had amassed to watch what was happening. Thirty or forty Wendell men were among that mob. Revolutionary War veteran Samuel Reed later told Sawin the following:

We didn't go to fight, but to see which was the strongest party. I had no intention of fighting my own state! But I was deceived. I had seen bullets fly thick enough in the Revolution [sic] War, but I stood it for my country. A ball came near to us from the Goverment Army and, striking a man, made the ice crust fly. When we saw that they were

ready to fight, I went to the tavern, paid my bill and came home. Captain Josiah Osgood kept guard about his house for a week lest he should be taken by Shays' men. All the Osgoods were for the Government. Feelings were very warm in town; men almost threatened to take each other's lives.

The militia squelched Shays' rebellion, leaving four dead and twenty wounded, but there was continued, sporadic resistance throughout central and western Massachusetts for the next six months. In Wendell, the hostility between the two sides was so pronounced that Oliver Wetherbee was “compelled to flee to York State,” as Sawin tells it. He took his family to Kingsbury, New York, just over the Massachusetts state line, where he eventually died in September 1813. John Wetherbee, out of necessity or in support of his cousin Oliver, also went to Kingsbury in 1787, according to Congregational church records copied into Sawin’s notes. Three years later, Wendell’s Vital Records show a “John Wetherbee of Kingsbury in the state of New York” marrying either his second or third wife, Abigail Osgood of Wendell.

Old land records show that Ethan Wetherby, Oliver’s brother, was one of the first owners of Lot #56 (part of which was owned later by James Tyrer), indicating that he may have arrived in town at the same time as Oliver and John. And in 1788, just after Shays’ Rebellion, his property was sold to Jonathan Crosby for non-payment of taxes, which suggests that Ethan, too, may have fled town due to the antipathy felt towards Oliver. The fact that Oliver Wetherbee, a man who had lived and prospered in town for twenty-five years, felt compelled to leave his recently-built home and the community in which he had been so successful speaks volumes about the heightened emotionality surrounding Shays’ Rebellion. That his brother, cousin, and at least two of his grown children and their families all fled with him says even more.

Oliver Wetherbee and John Wetherbee (whose fathers were brothers) were nephews of Hezekiah Wetherbee (b. 1704), the 5th-great-grandfather of current resident and Wendell native Tom Wetherby. Hezekiah never lived in Wendell, but — oddly enough — his 2nd-great-grandson, Joseph Wetherby (Tom’s great-grandfather) came
to Wendell from Vermont with his wife and son, Pliny, just before the turn of the last century. They settled into an old farmhouse which stood where Tom and his wife, Sylvia, now live on Morse Village Road. In the 1900 Wendell census, “Plin” was seventeen, living there with his parents and working as a “day laborer.” Their neighbors were Frank and Alice Taylor who had a ten-year old daughter, Edith. Nine years later, Plin married Edith and they raised eleven children in his family home. Plin established himself as a “lumberman” or “sawyer,” sent some of his children to the New Salem Academy, and added to his real estate by purchasing the property and house across the street, where his son Francis later raised a family. That house is still owned by the Wetherbys. Francis met his wife, Jessie Taylor, at a dance in Wendell Depot in the large frame building that once stood across from the Post Office. The first floor held Putnam’s store and a barber shop, and the top floor boasted a ballroom, where a dentist from Orange ran a weekly dance. Francis was a machine shop foreman at I. D. Hunt in Orange. Although not as active in town affairs as his wife, Francis did serve on a committee responsible for bringing more heat into Town Hall. Jessie described town meeting in the 1950s as a great social event: elections were held on the same day as town meeting, and the Ladies’ Aid group served a meal of hot stew and dessert all day long; when the polls closed at seven o’clock, town meeting began, and everybody stayed until all the votes were counted.118

Genealogical Notes:
Oliver Wetherbee’s father was Josiah Quincy Wetherbee (1706–1783) and John Wetherbee’s father was John Wetherbee III (1701–1746). Hezekiah Wetherbee (1705–1754) was brother to both Josiah Quincy and John III.

The family name is spelled as “Wetherbee,” “Witherby,” and “Wetherby.”

* * *

Two of the oldest homes in Wendell today were owned by the Ballard family. Both are on Jennison Road, one on the corner of Old Stage Road and the other about a mile to the west (#75 Jennison), set back and above the road on a south-facing slope.

William Ballard was the family’s immigrant ancestor, who came to this country from England aboard the “Mary and John” in 1634. His grandson, Captain Jeremiah Ballard of Andover, bought land in New Salem and became one of that town’s most prominent settlers, dying there in 1761. Jeremiah’s third son, Daniel, moved to Wendell, where he was the probable builder of the elegant, two-story house on 160 acres at the corner of Old Stage Road around 1779, according to Sawin. This Daniel Ballard (to whom we will give the Roman numeral “I”) was on the Wendell Tax List in 1783\(^{119}\) and he kept a tavern, the Ballard Tavern, at his house on Old Stage Road. A brief history of Wendell written in 1931 at the 150\(^{th}\) anniversary of the town’s incorporation describes this house/tavern as being

much the same [in 1931] as it was except that a veranda has been added and the dance floor on the second floor has been made into bedrooms. The old barn near the house remains unchanged. The entire farm now comprises 216 acres. It is not known who built the tavern nor when, but it is 150 years old at least [that would date it to c. 1781]... For 25 or 30 years, the Ballard Tavern, where the stage coaches stopped to change horses and give passengers a chance to secure food and drink...was the only stopping place of its kind between Greenfield and Worcester.\(^{120}\)

\(^{119}\) See Appendix II.

\(^{120}\) “The 150\(^{th}\) Anniversary of the Incorporation of the Town of Wendell, Mass.,” August 12, 1931, 4-5, available at the Wendell Library.
Photographs taken of the Ballard Tavern in the mid-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Photo at top courtesy of Joan Afferica. House was built c. 1779, according to Sawin.

(It will be recalled that the stage route in those early years went over Rockwell Hill, passing the property that Sawin’s father bought in 1815, on its way to Petersham and Worcester.) Family records further describe the house as having an enormous fireplace in the kitchen, which was outfitted with doors on both sides that, when open, allowed oxen to draw huge logs into the room.

When Daniel I died at his Old Stage Road home in 1808, his son Josiah (1762–1837) succeeded him. Josiah had “served several months as a Revolutionary soldier [and marched to Ticonderoga], having enlisted when but sixteen years of age in the place of his father, who was drafted.” After his father’s death, Josiah increased the size of his Old Stage Road property to two hundred acres and became known as a progressive farmer,

121 Leading Citizens of Franklin County, 212.
who did “an extensive business in real estate and in lumber.”

Twenty years after Josiah’s death, Lowell Jennison bought the old Ballard Tavern and, upon his death, the place passed to Lowell’s son Charles, who ran a large dairy business, cut a great quantity of lumber, and annually manufactured about 200 gallons of maple syrup.

Josiah’s son Daniel II (1802–1870) grew up at the old tavern, and then, just before his marriage to Dulcenia Brown in 1833, he purchased a two-hundred-acre property for himself a half-mile to the west of his father’s place, “a rocky, hilly farm [with] sugar-yielding, shade-giving maples, [where] they reared their large family.”

Family records suppose that Daniel II was the builder of the house; however, Sawin credits Thomas Atherton II, whose father of the same name had lived behind the Ballard house on Locke Hill Road, as having been the one to build the Ballard house, perhaps as early as 1785.

For a time between 1821 and 1833, when Daniel Ballard bought the property, a man named John Hammond (“quite a man in town for sometime,” said Sawin) lived there, and the place was known as “Five Chestnuts” because of five great chestnut trees that grew in a straight line along the edge of the road in front of the barn.

Daniel II became “one of the most prosperous farmers [in Wendell]. Possessing great individuality and force of character, he was very influential in local affairs...He was a Whig in his earlier days, but on the formation of the Republican party became one of its most earnest adherents.” In the family papers, a descendant describes Daniel II as having been a frugal man who put at least $50 in a savings bank every year. His income came primarily from the sale and delivery of hemlock bark (at $2 per cord) and from cutting timber and wood. Other sources of cash for Mr. Ballard derived from making maple sugar, selling hay and

122 Ibid.
123 New Salem Reunion Banner, August 19, 1920, 18.
124 Ibid.
125 Leading Citizens of Franklin County, 212.
126 The Ballard Family Papers are kept at the Swift River Valley Historical Society, New Salem, Massachusetts.
apples, pasturing cattle, and working with his oxen. Just before his death in 1870, the value of Daniel II’s farm had tripled from twenty years earlier, rising from $1500 to $4400.127

Daniel II and Dulcennia’s four girls and five boys spent at least a few terms at the New Salem Academy, where their parents also had received some part of their education. The children all lived through childhood, but three lost their lives in early adulthood: first-born daughter, Dulcennia Jane, died at eighteen of appendicitis; Lois Annie was taken by spinal meningitis at twenty-one; and Milton, who had once climbed the spire of the church in New Salem to recite “Spartacus to the Gladiators” to his fellow-students, was wounded in the Civil War and died only a few months after his return home.128 The last born, Lester, was eighteen when his father died of typhoid pneumonia, making it necessary for him to help his brothers Daniel III and Albert run their father’s lumber business. They operated a steam sawmill there for over a decade until they sold the family home in 1883 to a Mr. McCoy, who later passed it to Fred Jennison.

Home of Daniel Ballard, thought by Sawin to have been built by Thomas Atherton, c. 1785.

Photograph above courtesy of Swift River Valley Historical Society.

128 New Salem Reunion Banner, August 19, 1920, 18.
Daniel Ballard II kept detailed accounts of his household expenses. The line items below reveal something of family life as well as the past value of one dollar:

**Pre-1845**: 6 cents a week to the town of Shutesbury for educating the children

**1849**: 2 bottles of medicine “for myself and Jane,” 50 cents

**1851**: a pair of shoes for Jane, $1.12

**1855**: a set of gravestones for Janie’s grave, $6.00

**1860**: extracting a tooth, 12 cents

**1863**: mending Albert’s boots, 37 cents

**1864**: $4.95 for a hat for Mrs. Ballard

**1865**: a bottle of lemon extract, 20 cents and 6 oz. of nutmeg, 13 cents

Another item of interest from Ballard’s books is the sore throat remedy which the family called “the stuff in the porringer.” A mixture of molasses, vinegar, butter, and a shake of pepper were cooked in a porringer and taken as needed.

For reasons we will never know, Thomas Sawin did not think highly of Daniel Ballard II; he described him as “tight and jealous,” and accused him of “absorbing the district school fund.” (One man in each of the different school districts of Wendell was appointed to administer that school’s funds, and Ballard was the administrator for the school which was built on the east side of Old Stage Road in 1845. That school house burned to the ground in the 1980s.) Daniel’s books, however, contain an itemized list of the many duties he performed in his role as school administrator and what he paid himself for each job. Had he seen this accounting, Sawin may well have thought twice about his indictment of the man.

Daniel Ballard II died in 1870 and was buried in South Cemetery, close to the family home, with his wife, his parents, and four of his children. Today, Ballard’s house has been lovingly restored and boasts many original features, such as a well housed in a small room off the kitchen and an enormous bee-hive oven. Members of the Ballard family did their cooking in the oven and
the fireplace until sometime around 1840 when a cook-stove was installed.

Genealogical Note:
Daniel Ballard I was born in Andover in 1728 and died in Wendell in 1808. He married Ruth Holton, 1735–1817. Their son Josiah was born in New Salem in 1762 and died in Wendell in 1837. His wife was Frances Jane Zuill, who was born in Boston in 1768 and died at Locke’s Village in 1856.

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There are nineteen people with the last name of Clark in Center Cemetery, and it appears that they belong to four different (but maybe not unrelated) strains of Clarks. The first of these begins with Benjamin Clark, born in 1749 to Benjamin and Bethia Clark in Abington, Massachusetts. A great deal of information regarding this family has been provided by Benjamin’s 3rd-great-granddaughter and Wendell native, Florrie Clark Blackbird. Nothing is known of Benjamin’s childhood, but at age twenty-five he was a drummer at the Battle of Bunker Hill in Captain Briggs’ company from Stoughton. After this,

He [Benjamin] continued to serve for over two years with only a brief furlough in December 1775 to marry Mehitable Edson in Bridgewater. Following his discharge from the army in early 1777, Benjamin and Mehitable left southeastern Massachusetts for Royalston, a twelve-year-old town...As the Clark family grew to include seven children, Benjamin lived a quiet life marked by ordinary accomplishments. He tended his farm, quarried stone, made shoes, and gained some local reknown as the singing-master. At age 48, he wrote some drum beatings into a small blank book. His life continued in this manner for eighteen more years until his death in the spring of 1815. His book of drum beatings was passed among several family members and was eventually given to the Massachusetts Historical Society. It is...a singular example of late 18th-century snare drum technique which heretofore could only be speculated, not studied.129

Benjamin Clark’s book of fife tunes and drum beatings from the year 1797 is well-known by anyone interested in the marching tunes and duty calls of the Revolutionary War era.

Benjamin and Mehitable’s son Josiah, born in 1787 in Royalston, is the one who immigrated to Wendell. He was reared on his

129 Bob Castillo and Susan Cifaldi, Benjamin Clark’s Drum Book, Containing Thirty-six Beatings from the Year 1797 and Forty-six Fife Tunes from the Same Period, The Hendrickson Group, 1989, xi.
father’s farm and, like his father, pursued agricultural work. He worked for other farmers and earned both a fair amount of money and a name for himself in the cradling and threshing of rye. His record as a thresher in one winter, with the ordinary hand flail, was 800 bushels. Josiah came to Wendell and married “Annie” Potter in February 1817. (Anna Potter’s mother, Patience Boynton Potter Death, died at age ninety-seven and is buried in Center Cemetery. See her name under “Miscellanea.”) According to Sawin, Josiah and Annie lived just north of Bullard Road, in an area populated by other Clark families, at what is today #96 New Salem Road. Their children were: Josiah II (b. 1818), Horace (b.1819), Anna Maria (b.1822), Eliza (b. 1825), Joel Emory (b. 1827), Mary Ann (b. 1829), and Chester (b. 1832).

After Josiah’s death in 1853, Chester became the owner of his father’s 140-acre farm, which included, most likely, the Cape-style house his father had built around 1817. Chester, who never married, lived there with his sister, Mary Ann, for the rest of their lives. Joel Emory, who went by his middle name and who married Mary Jane Stone (daughter of Darius Stone), built a house next to the family homestead (sometime between the 1858 and 1871

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Josiah and Annie Potter Clark. Photographs courtesy of Florrie Blackbird.

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130 Leading Citizens of Franklin County, Massachusetts, 589.
131 Ibid.
maps) on the west side of the road, but – according to family lore – when Mary Jane wanted it moved across the street, Emory obliged, and there it sits today (#103 New Salem Road). On the 1850 census, Emory gave his occupation as “daguerreotypist,” and the 1855 census says that Wendell’s one daguerreotypist – certainly this was Emory Clark – produced, in that year, 125 prints valued at $75. In addition to his work as a photographer and a farmer, Emory was employed towards the end of his life at the town Poor Farm. He was a Baptist, but when that church disbanded, he became a Congregationalist. He died in 1902.

Next to the central chimney in Chester’s house, the Cape built by Josiah, was a “secret room” in which an old musket ball was found by later occupants. In the 1920s, a Luther Daniels came to this house from New York City after receiving a severe injury from which he didn’t expect to recover, but recover he did, and he and his grandson, Al Miller, lived there for quite a while. In the 1960s, the house, painted purple, served as home and stop-over for many people. It was purchased in the 1980s by Karen Copeland, but then burned to the ground in 1992. Today, next to the house that was built to replace the one demolished by fire, two enormous old maples lean into each other, conjuring up the spirits of two of the original inhabitants of the place, siblings Mary Ann and Chester Clark.

Emory and Mary Jane’s son, George Emory Clark, was born in 1868 at the family farm. In adulthood, he worked for the railroad and on the Hoosac Tunnel. He and his wife, Bertha Ellen Davis, moved for a time to Orange hoping to provide better schooling for their son Chester, but they returned to New Salem Road after George retired. George died of a heart attack while fixing a well on the farm.

133 Ibid.
George and Bertha had three sons, Walter, Ray, and Chester. Twenty years separated Walter from Chester, who was born in 1916 when his father was 48 years old. Pictured below (from left to right) are Bertha’s father (William Davis), George, Bertha, Walter, and Ray (Chester was not yet born) in front of the family’s farmhouse.

Chester Emory Clark married Florence Williams. He was a sawyer with a portable sawmill and a moveable “shanty” that he often used as living quarters for his family. In the 1940s, he bought up
land with good timber and moved his mill and shanty from one site to another, harvesting trees. When their fifth child, Florrie, was about five years old, Chester and his wife decided to give up that life-style and returned home to the farm on New Salem Road, where Florrie and her siblings grew up. Florrie married Jay Blackbird and, in the late 1970s, they decided to build a house on top of an old cellar hole on the north corner of Bullard Road, right down the road from the Clark farmhouse. (Silas Bullard, for whom Bullard Road is named, lived at the far end of the road, closer to Whetstone Brook.) Before building could begin, Jay had to remove an enormous maple tree stump from the cellar hole. The 110 rings he counted in the stump showed that the tree had started growing in the cellar hole about 1860. The house above the cellar disappeared – probably by fire – sometime before 1858 because it does not appear on the Walling map of that year.

Among the many items in Florrie’s collection of family memorabilia is “a sure cure of the severest cases of smallpox or scarlet fever.” Here is the recipe:

\[
1 \text{ grain of sulphate of zinc} + 1 \text{ grain of foxglove} + \frac{1}{2} \text{ teaspoon of sugar. Mix thoroughly. Add 4 ounces of water. Take 1 spoonful every hour. Disease will disappear in 12 hours.}
\]

The J. E. Clark family homestead on New Salem Road, unlike so many old homes in Wendell, has survived the passage of time and is lived in today by Florrie’s sister, Judy Clark Davis, and her family.

A second Clark clan in Wendell originated with Elijah Clark (b. 1756) of Medway, Massachusetts, who married Julia Bullard of the same town. Elijah and Julia moved to Wendell and built a house in 1795 on the south corner of Bullard Road. Julia and Elijah had a son, James, who served as an ensign and lieutenant in the War of 1812 and was regarded by Sawin as a “good man.” James’s son, James Edson Clark, was at various times constable, tax collector, and town clerk in Wendell, and he was representative to the General Court in Boston in 1857. Sawin says that James lived in the house built by his grandfather Elijah, but he may have been the last to do so: Clark family tradition

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134 Florrie Blackbird pointed out James’s middle name of “Edson,” suggesting a family tie to Benjamin Clark and Mehitable Edson, mentioned above.
has it that the house was twice hit by lightning, and therefore the property was not a suitable site on which to rebuild.

Elijah Clark’s younger brother, Abijah, also came to Wendell, but died “in his 28th year of canker and rash,” as is written on his gravestone in Center Cemetery. Julia Bullard Clark’s two brothers, Silas and Elihu Bullard, came to Wendell, too. Silas Bullard married Experience Orcutt, daughter of Jonathan Orcutt, and he built his home on 170 acres at the end of Bullard Road. Their son and heir was Silas Bullard II, husband of Hannah Hager (see the Genealogical Note under “Martin and Charles Hager”). Silas I’s brother Elihu married Hannah Howe, daughter of Abel and Hannah Howe. Consequently, Silas II’s wife (Hannah Morse Hager Bullard) and Elihu’s wife (Hannah Howe Bullard) were both “Hannah Bullard” and, strangely, they both died in 1849 – the younger of unknown cause and the older of “numb-palsy.” Elihu and Hannah were the parents of Albert Bullard, after whom Bullard Pasture Road is named. Silas Bullard II’s sister Lucy (b. 1819) married Bezaliel Locke’s son, Ebenezer Locke; both are pictured below.

A third strain of Clarks started with Joshua Clark (1780–1853), who came from New Salem and built a sawmill, a house, and a barn in northeast Wendell, not far from the other Clark families. He married Susannah Smith, whose 3rd-great-grandfather was John Alden of the Mayflower. Joshua, a church deacon, was the
man who discovered excellent spring water in the side of a hill behind his house. His son, Endor Clark (b. 1807), was a farmer, turner, and member of the Baptist church; he married three times, lived along Whetstone Brook, and died in 1882. William, another of Joshua’s sons, became a carpenter, settled on Whetstone Brook, and ran a sawmill there owned by carpenter Beriah Oakes (see “Beriah Oakes”). Joshua’s daughter Parney married Samuel Foster, a wheelwright, millwright, and mechanic who also lived and worked on Whetstone Brook. Joshua suffered some big losses in his life: his sawmill burned down twice, and he experienced severe financial trouble when, having volunteered to accept $500 from the town to feed and house its poor, a steep increase in the price of grain in 1836-7 required him to spend far more than he had anticipated for their support. On top of these misfortunes, Sawin says, Joshua “was afflicted with a terrible disease which nothing check[ed] but drops containing arsenic.” Nonetheless, he lived to be seventy-two years old, dying of neuralgia in 1853. Before leaving this Clark family, it bears noting that the above-mentioned Endor Clark was the father of Lewis B. Clark (b. 1849) who, in his late twenties, went into the sawmill business in Wendell with his neighbor, Joel Marble. The following is a newspaper account from December 8, 1880, entitled “Terrible Accident at Wendell:”

A boiler in the steam sawmill of Marble and Clark, which was located on a timber lot in the northwest part of Wendell [probably at south end of Wickett Pond]...exploded this morning, about 5 o’clock, killing seven persons and injuring two others. Those at work on the lot have occupied a building about six or eight rods from the mill. The boiler was hurled against this building, setting it on fire and entirely consuming it. The killed are Messrs. Marble and Clark, the proprietors, Oscar, Willie and George Brown, three sons of Hosea Brown of New Salem. The youngest of the Brown boys was seventeen, and the oldest twenty-one. Mrs. Felton who was keeping house [in the house next to the mill] and a young child were killed. George Reynolds has a leg broken and Charles Reynolds a shoulder badly smashed.135

Wendell’s death records report that the three Brown boys were sixteen, seventeen, and nineteen. The housekeeper was Sarah Albee Felton, and the young boy was probably her son, LeRoy. About a week later, according to the town’s death records, two more men were dead as a result of a steam boiler explosion—undoubtedly the same one. They were twenty-three-year-old Charles Wyman and thirty-one-year-old Henry Alden. All of the dead were buried in New Salem.

Finally, the fourth Clark family began in Wendell with Luther Clark of Sudbury who fought in the Battle of Concord in the Revolutionary War and guarded state stores. Luther and his wife, Relief, settled in Wendell, and their son Peter (b. 1792) was an active member of the Congregational church and farmed his whole life. His son, Dwight Clark, born in 1831, grew up in Wendell, and taught in one of its schools before making his life elsewhere.

Norman Clark, a Baptist Reverend [see “Baptist Church”] also lived in Wendell in the mid-1800s, but no family connection has been established yet.

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NATHAN BREWER I
& his sons, Nathan II & Samuel,
Servants of Town and Church

Nathan Brewer, born in 1747, was one of the nine children of Samuel and Martha (Bent) Brewer of Rutland, Massachusetts. The date of his arrival in Wendell is unknown, but Sawin says that Nathan, a tanner, bought the property on the north side of Montague Road where it joins with Wickett Pond Road (#54 Montague Road) and guessed that Brewer built his house there around 1770. Nathan Brewer married Sarah Crosby, younger sister of Jonathan Crosby I, in July 1774. Over the course of the next seventeen years they had seven children, but a set of twins and a little girl died as infants. Nathan was a founder of the Wendell Congregational Church in 1774, and served it as deacon from 1796 to 1802. He was elected one of three tything-men at the first town meeting in 1781, and he served on the Wendell Board of Selectmen in 1784 and again from 1796 to 1812. (Reverend Beaman claimed that Brewer’s tenure was from 1790 to 1827, but it may be that his son of the same name served for some of those years and that someone neglected to specify whether the Nathan Brewer in question was “Senior” or “Junior.”)

Land records show that in 1796 Nathan purchased from Oliver Wendell the 100-acre parcel known as Lot #57 on the “Gentlemen’s Plan.” This lot had been traded back and forth in real estate deals between Jonathan Jackson and Oliver Wendell since 1771. The old deeds do not convey any buildings with Lot #57, and even Nathan did not build on it. In 1801, he sold the land to his son Nathan II (b. 1778) for $400. Nathan I died in 1832, at age eighty-five, and was buried in Center Cemetery. Sarah died the same year, at seventy-seven, and she was buried beside him. Levi Stone, cabinet maker in Wendell, charged their son Samuel $2.13 for making his father’s coffin and $2.17 for his mother’s.  

Nathan II (1778–1853) married Esther Jones the same year he bought Lot #57 from his father, but it wasn’t until 1811 that he built a “three-quarter Cape” there for himself and his family. Twenty-six years later, Nathan II sold the house to John Howe, son of Ephraim Howe, for $950. Esther died in 1844 of dysentery, and a year later Nathan II married Sybil “Libby” Briggs. Nathan II died in 1853, and Libby died in 1862. Both are buried in Center Cemetery. Nathan Brewer’s house on Lot #57 stood as a memorial to him for nearly two hundred years. In the last century, former professor Marion Herrick owned and lived in Brewer’s house for fifty years, but it then fell into disrepair. Today’s owners have rebuilt the house, using many of Nathan’s beams and boards.

Samuel Brewer, Nathan II’s brother, was born in Wendell in 1784. In 1808, he married Fannie Watt, and they raised their six children (a seventh child died when she was twelve) in his father’s home on the corner of Montague and Wickett Pond Roads. Samuel served as a lieutenant colonel in the Third Regiment Infantry, Second Brigade of the Massachusetts Militia and, like his brother Nathan, was active in the affairs of both the church and the town. He intermittently served on the Select Board for a total of twenty-five years and held the positions of assessor and town clerk for several years. He was clerk of the Congregational church for most of the first half of the nineteenth century. (An interesting note: one day I plugged the name “Samuel Brewer” into Google Search and, to my astonishment, came up with an eBay offering...
of the original Wendell Congregational church records written in long-hand by Samuel Brewer. I bought the lovely old book, was reimbursed by the Friends of the Meetinghouse, and stored it safely with our other town artifacts.) Sawin described Samuel as a shoemaker and a farmer, “an able man in church and town offices,” and a “hard drinker.” As a farmer, he was very successful. The cash value of his farm in 1850 was $3,000, twice that of the prosperous farm of Daniel Ballard. Samuel Brewer could boast of 180 acres of improved land, a number unsurpassed by anyone else in town, on which he produced 100 bushels of corn per year, far and away more than the harvest of other farmers in Wendell. 138 As noted in the section on the First Congregational Church, it appears that Samuel Brewer was the man who paid for one-third of the cost of the new church built in 1846. In the late 1860s, when Samuel and Fanny were in their eighties, they went to live in Montague, next door to their daughter Mary, whose husband, John Payne, supported his family by making boots and shoes – just as Samuel had done. At that time, the house built by Samuel’s father, Nathan I, and added on to with two ells by Samuel became the home of Samuel’s son, Nathan Coit Brewer, also a shoemaker, until he moved to Montague. It then took on new life as the Wendell Almshouse, but was destroyed by fire in 1897.

In Reverend Beaman’s 1874 Historical Discourse, he had this praise for

Mystery Solved?

When the current owners of the Nathan Brewer house dismantled its interior, which had suffered severe damage from neglect and the 2006 tornado, they discovered what they thought were a date and initials inscribed on one of the ceiling beams: “68 N B.” This was confounding because no person named Nathan Brewer was born in 1768, neither Nathan I or II would have been sixty-eight at the time of the home’s construction (1811), and the house was not built as early as 1768 – or as late as 1868. As work continued, they discovered more beams and boards with the letters “N B” – and a variety of numbers – chiseled into them, leading them to the conclusion that the letters and numbers had been carved into the lumber at the sawmill to identify the pieces belonging to Nathan Brewer.

Colonel Samuel Brewer who had then already passed his 90\textsuperscript{th} birthday:

\begin{quote}
An enterprising farmer, and liberal supporter here of public worship for much more than half of the century; a worshipper in the old house several years...and a most efficient worker and contributor for this in which we are assembled; familiar, officially and otherwise, with the civil and religious affairs of the town three quarters of the century or more; and, though his sight is dim, and natural force abated, he is a living library of his native town.\textsuperscript{139}
\end{quote}

Fanny and Samuel both died in Montague, she in 1876 and he in 1879.

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\textbf{Genealogical Note:}
Sarah Brewer (1775–1844), sister of Nathan II and Samuel, married Abraham Stone II (see “Stone Family”) who, Sawin says, ran off and abandoned her and their four children – two of whom Samuel then took into his care. As late as 1865, one of these “children,” Sally, age sixty-five, was still living with Samuel and Fannie. Incidentally, Fannie’s mother was Martha Brewer of Worthington, Massachusetts, and thus, possibly, a relative of Samuel.

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\textsuperscript{139} Beaman, Centennial Celebration, 25.
Asa and Mary Howe of Petersham had two sons who went to Wendell and made their lives there: Ephraim (b. 1754) and Abel (b. 1757). The older of the two Howe brothers, Ephraim, married Esther Drury of Phillipston in 1786. After the birth of their first child that same year, Ephraim and Esther moved to Wendell, where they had five more children. Esther died in 1829 and Ephraim died in 1833; they are both buried in Center Cemetery. Their children were:

1. Ephraim, born 1786.
2. Captain Joel (1788–1872) who married Eunice Stone, daughter of Abraham Stone and Sarah Brewer – mentioned in the Genealogical Note above. Eunice lived to be 100 years old (1797–1897). In the mid-1800s, Sawin described Joel as the “son of an old settler, a reliable man and a rich farmer who works no more.”
3. Emery, 1793–1811. He “died under a mercurial operation prescribed by Dr. Goldthwait as a cure for lameness” and is buried in Center Cemetery.
4. Eliza, 1794–1887, married Joseph Needham and became the mother of Mary Needham Phelps (see the story under her name).
5. Artemas, 1799–1805. His gravestone says that he was killed instantly by a falling timber at the age of six; Sawin adds that this happened while “visiting a cyder [sic] mill.” He is buried in Center Cemetery.
6. John, 1803–1886, married Sophia Thompson of Wendell. He became a very wealthy man. Sawin says he was a “speculator,” and land records indicate that he bought and sold a great number of properties. In the mid-1800s, he was living in Nathan Brewer II’s house on Wickett Pond Road which he had bought for $950; he also owned the adjacent property, once owned by James Tyrer. In 1860, John Howe owned his 50-acre homestead (he sold off

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140 Kilburn, Journal.
part of Lot #57 to Benjamin Davis in 1851) and an additional 320 acres in town; included in his estate were four sawmills, one sheep, five horses, four oxen, four cows, one two-year yearling, one three-year yearling, and two swine.\textsuperscript{141} He died of gangrene at age eighty-three. One of his four children, Harlan Howe, owned – and most likely built – the house (pictured below) at the end of Davis Road on the Montague line.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{harlan_howe_house}
\caption{Harlan Howe’s house on Davis Road in about 1859. The house burned in the early 1900s when lived in by the Drozdowski family. It was rebuilt and later remodeled. The barn, however, is the same one used by Harlan Howe. (This Howes Brothers photograph, courtesy of Bill and Laurel Facey, is on file at the Ashfield Historical Society.)}
\end{figure}

Lieutenant Abel Howe (1757–1842), Ephraim’s younger brother, married Hannah Needham (1752–1801). They, too, are buried in Center Cemetery. They had three girls (Mary, Anna, and Lydia) and two boys (Asa and Newell). Asa studied medicine and practiced for a while as a physician in Wendell; he and his wife, Relief, are buried in Center Cemetery. Newell married Catherine, daughter of Jacob and Mary Cutler of Wendell, and they relocated to Monson, Massachusetts. Lydia died, unmarried, at seventy-four years in Wendell in 1860. Anna, born in 1780, married Joseph Merry of Boston in 1806. Of Mary, nothing has been found.

\textsuperscript{141} 1860 Wendell Valuations kept in the Town Vault, Wendell, Massachusetts.
A younger brother of Ephraim and Abel, Benjamin Howe, seems never to have lived in Wendell, but in the 1830s his son Ivory Holland Howe built at least one house in this town. It belonged to Dr. Lucius Cooke and stood on the Common at the north end of Center Cemetery.

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SOME EARLY QUESTIONS

and Decisions Made by the Town

The following questions and decisions – some of which have already been mentioned – are taken from early town warrants and annual reports. Due to missing documents, the outcomes of some of the warrant items are unknown. This information is taken from Sawin’s notes and from early records kept at the Wendell Library. Unfortunately, a void exists between 1850 and 1900.

1756: Road Commission instructed to lay a road to the north end of town. This went from Locke’s Pond (Lake Wyola) over Locke Hill. Road Commission also charged with laying another road across the town from Sunderland (Montague) line to New Salem line. (See “Roads.”)

1772: voted that the inhabitants of Ervingshire not be annexed to the Town of Shutesbury. This was an important factor in the separation of the two towns and in the 1781 incorporation of Wendell as its own entity.

1781: voted to build a meetinghouse 55’ long by 40’ wide.

1782: voted to build a work house; voted to divide the town into four squadrons for schooling.

1783: voted to make provisions for raising the meetinghouse, to pay for lodgings for men from New Salem, and to allow Jonathan Crosby for what rum shall be expended.

1786: voted to build a set of stocks; voted to build a log pound, 30’ square. (Note: this was a log pound. See “1816” below.)

1790: voted not to comply with Reverend Kilburn’s request to be dismissed.

1791: voted that there be five school districts.

1797: voted that there shall be paid a bounty of two dollars each for wild cats killed.

1801: voted that there shall be paid a bounty on all blackbirds killed in town.
1808: Selectmen directed to petition against the embargo and pay for its repeal. (The embargo of 1807–1809 was enacted in response to the seizing of US ships, a violation of US neutrality, by England and France during the Napoleonic Wars. The embargo put a stranglehold on American overseas trade and created a financial disaster throughout the US.)

1809: voted that swine may run at large; voted that graves shall be dug at the expense of the town.

1812: voted that powder and balls be provided sufficient for the soldiers when inspected; voted that hogs may not run at large.

1815: voted that cattle be forbidden to run in the road.

1816: voted to build a pound (this was probably the stone pound whose remains can be seen today at #78-80 Montague Road); town warrant item to see if the Town will prohibit cattle from running at large; another item was to determine what means shall be taken to support the poor.

1817: town warrant item to determine the mode of supplying and providing for the poor and the way in which they shall be employed towards helping in their support.

1819: town warrant again included items regarding the care of paupers and the free range of cattle and swine.

1832: town warrant item to see if the Town will pay a bounty on crows “or any wild creatures” and an item, again, concerning the running at large of horses, swine, and cattle.

1842: purchase by the town of a farm and house for the habitation and employment of paupers (not Samuel Brewer’s house; see “Paupers and the Almshouse”).

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JOSHUA GREEN, ESQUIRE
Wendell’s “most useful and influential man”

If there is one man who stands out prominently in Wendell’s history, it is Joshua Green. Writing in 1855, historian Holland declared that Green was “for many years the most useful and influential man in the town and its vicinity.” This would have been an accolade of the highest order for Green who often said “I would rather be useful than great.”

Joshua Green, affectionately known to all as “Squire Green,” served the town of Wendell for a total of more than forty years as selectman, church deacon, treasurer, and assessor. He was also a prominent judge, senator, justice of the peace, and trustee, for thirty-three years, of the New Salem Academy. For elected offices, such as the Select Board on which he sat for three decades, Green was usually voted in unanimously; occasionally, there was one dissenting vote: his own. His service was a testimony to his dedication to his adopted town as was his 1823 gift of the land for the parsonage (#18 Montague Road). Some accounts say that Green donated the house as well, but most agree that the gift was the land only. Green did, however, stipulate that his gift should serve “forever” as a place for the parsonage, but declining membership and financial means eventually necessitated the rental and then the sale of the house in 1941. Joshua Green was, in many respects, the glue that held Wendell together, and his passing was a watershed event in the life of the town. Holland said it was to Joshua Green, “more than to any other man, [that] the town owed its former intelligence and prosperity.”

Joshua was born into a distinguished Boston family which began in North America in 1635 with the arrival from England of his 3rd-great-grandfather Percival Green (b. 1602) on the Susan

142 Holland, *History of Western Massachusetts*, 458.
144 Centennial Celebration of the Wendell Congregational Church, “Collation,” (Amherst: Henry M. McCloud, 1875), 41.
145 Holland, *History of Western Massachusetts*, 458.
and Ellen. Percival established his family in a house on the north side of the Cambridge Common. Percival’s son, Jonathan Green (1636–1690), was a prosperous housewright, and his son, Reverend Joseph Green (1674–1715), was a preacher of independent means (see sidebar). Reverend Green’s son, also named Joseph (1703–1765), became a wealthy Boston merchant whose portrait was painted by John Singleton Copley and is now owned by Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts. In 1740, he was one of three grantees of a tract of land in Franklin County known as the “Green and Walker Grant” (Green and Walker was the name of his firm; the location of the land grant is not known). This man was also the grandfather of Wendell’s Joshua Green and the maternal grandfather of Anna Green Winslow whose *Diary of Anne Green Winslow* was widely read in the late eighteenth century. Joseph’s son Joshua (father of Wendell’s Joshua Green) graduated from Harvard in 1749 and prospered as a merchant. He married Hannah Storer in 1762. During the British occupation of Boston at the onset of the Revolution, Joshua and Hannah fled the city and went to Westfield, Massachusetts, where they remained for the duration of the war. When they returned to Boston, they found their house in shambles and reported losses of over 3,500 pounds. Hannah was a life-long, intimate friend of Abigail Adams, and many letters from Mrs. Adams were found among Hannah’s papers at her death.¹⁴⁶

Joshua Green (b. 1764) entered Boston Latin School in 1773, but his education there was interrupted by his family’s flight to Westfield. After the war, he returned to school and earned both a

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¹⁴⁶ Some of the letters between them survive at the Massachusetts Historical Society and in Samuel Abbott Green’s book identified in footnote 142.
BA (1784) and an MA (1787) from Harvard. His grandfather’s large landholdings in rural Franklin County may be how and why Joshua came to Wendell in 1790, despite the fact that “his fine talents and bright prospects made his choosing to make a life in Wendell seem strange to his friends.” He built a house on Montague Road slightly to the west of Colonel Samuel Brewer’s home. In 1791, Joshua married Mary Mosely (1768–1821) from Westfield. The eldest of Joshua and Mary’s two sons was Henry Atkinson Green (1792–1863), who became the father of Edward Henry Green (1821–1902), notable for his marriage to Henrietta Howland Robinson (“Hetty”) Green, the millionaire often known as the “witch of Wall Street.” Hetty inherited vast sums of money from her father, who earned a fortune in the New Bedford whaling industry, and she was the first woman to make a substantial impact on Wall Street. She turned her inheritance into what would be, today, somewhere between two and four billion dollars. Known for her frugality and eccentricity, Hetty’s miserliness is still the subject of stories – both founded and not – about her.

In the early 1800s, Joshua’s parents came from Boston to live with him and his family in Wendell. His father died in 1806, his mother in 1811, and both are buried in Center Cemetery.

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147 Centennial Celebration of the Congregational Church, Wendell, Massachusetts, “Collation,” 40. Samuel Abbott Green (see footnote 142) captures much of the same sentiment when he says on page 66: “In the freshness of early manhood, with a mind fitted by nature and cultivation for a high station in society, and with bright prospects before him, he [Joshua Green] voluntarily took up his residence in a small country town, at that time in its infancy.”
In 1807, Judge Green purchased from Oliver Wendell the property next door to the Congregational meetinghouse. Green demolished Wendell’s house and built, in its place, a magnificent two-story home, boasting eight rooms, a double-entry hall, two big brick ovens, beautiful fireplaces with carved frames, a large pantry, and very wide floor-boards. Lilac bushes graced the exterior. The house, uninhabited after 1864, was inherited by Hetty Green. She made her home in Bellows Falls, Vermont, and visited Wendell only occasionally. Due to Mrs. Green’s stinginess and consequent lack of upkeep, the house finally collapsed in 1911.

The elegant home built in 1807 by Joshua Green, Esq. next to the meetinghouse. The photograph, courtesy of Elizabeth Pierce at the Swift River Valley Historical Society, was taken about 1900 by long-time New Salem selectman Harry W. Fay.

The decaying Green home which finally collapsed. Photograph reproduced by Ed Judice and found at www.scua.library.umass.edu.

Joshua’s wife Mary died in 1821, and four years later he married her still single younger sister, Nancy. He himself died in 1847 of “old age” at eighty-three years. In the early 1850s, when Sawin was compiling his character remarks, he described Nancy as an “invalid now. Generous, but arbitrary [and] partially insane.” She died in 1856 and is buried alongside her sister, Judge Green, and his parents in Center Cemetery.

Genealogical Mystery:
All genealogies consulted state that Wendell’s Joshua Green was the son of Joshua Green (1730–1806), who was the son of Joseph Green (1703–1765). Oddly, however, the gravestone (in Center Cemetery) of Judge Green’s father says something different. It reads: “Joshua Green, son of Joshua [not “son of Joseph,” as would be expected], died 1806.” Is it possible that the gravestone cutter – or even the family – erred?

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Tragedy on Bear Mountain

The following account is a modified version of an article I wrote for the Montague Reporter. It has been updated to include information discovered after the original writing.

In late December 1799, thirty-two-year-old Benjamin Bufford (sometimes spelled “Buffard”) and Ruth Holmes, ten years his junior, went to the town clerk in Wendell and filed their intention to marry. The new year, the new century, and what they must have imagined as a long life together lay ahead of them.

Ruth had come to Wendell from Brookfield at the age of twelve in 1789 with the family of Josiah Austin, who settled on the former Aaron Osgood place. [Today this is #107 Wendell Depot Road.] No records have been found indicating why Ruth came without her parents and siblings, but she did already have one Wendell connection: her grandfather, Lieutenant Adam Holmes of New Braintree (adjacent to Brookfield) co-owned with his brother-in-law, Robert Hunter, a 100-acre property near Boundary Brook on the Montague line (see sidebar).

Benjamin’s roots are at once both more and less clear. By some strange twist of fate, I was contacted in the summer of 2013 by Ruth Wallis Herndon, Professor of History at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, regarding Benjamin Bufford. She was researching children who had been bound out as “pauper apprentices” by the Boston Overseers of the Poor between 1676 and 1825 and was trying to reconstruct the lives of some of them. She had selected Benjamin Bufford for inclusion in her project because of the assertiveness he showed by traveling to Boston only one week after his service was finished in order to secure a copy of his cancelled indenture. Finding him on Wendell’s 1798

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tax list, Dr. Herndon contacted Gretchen Smith, Wendell’s town clerk, who put her in touch with me. I had done a lot of research on Bufford’s life in Wendell, but – not for lack of looking – I knew nothing about his childhood and upbringing. It was a thrill for both Professor Herndon and me to be able to combine our separate stories of Benjamin into one account of his whole life. Professor Herndon’s part of Benjamin’s story relates to his life before the age of twenty-one, and Sawin’s and mine tells of what happened to him subsequently.

In 1772, when he was six years old, Benjamin was “bound out as a pauper apprentice” by the Boston Overseers of the Poor to a John Boyes of Rutland, Massachusetts, but his indenture was transferred only three months later to Elijah Stone of the same town. The terms of the indenture dictated that the child – in exchange for “service” and loyalty – would be given room, board, and clothing and taught “to read, write and cipher.” The contract also outlawed certain behaviors such as playing cards or dice, fornication, frequenting taverns, and matrimony. Lastly, Benjamin was to be set free on December 6, 1787, his twenty-first birthday, “with two good suits of wearing apparel fitting for all parts of his body, one for Lord’s days, the other for working days” and with “thirteen pounds, six shillings and eight pence,” the amount a laborer could earn in about two or three months at that time. A record of Benjamin’s release from his indenture is signed and dated “1787,” proving that Benjamin wasted no time
in going to Boston to secure that release. But where he went after
that cannot be found. In fact, there is no sign of Benjamin again
until 1798, when he shows up on Wendell’s tax records.¹⁵¹

Both Ruth Holmes and Benjamin Bufford were brought up by
people other than their parents, and we can imagine that having
orphan status in common may have been part of their attraction
to one another. Just after their marriage, Benjamin acquired the
deed to a 100-acre lot on Bear Mountain that he purchased from
ex-Governor, Erving heir, and land investor James Bowdoin III,
Esq., for $400. Benjamin had probably put up a rudimentary
homestead before his final payment on January 6, 1800, because,
according to Sawin, who interviewed Ruth when she was in her
seventies, she and Benjamin began living there as soon they were
married.

A parenthetical and touching note: before I knew about
Benjamin’s past as a pauper apprentice, I took my metal-detect¬
ing friend, Paul Wawrzonek, to the foundation of what was once
Benjamin and Ruth’s home. Quickly determining where the front
doors must have been, Paul turned on the detector and put on
his head phones. Almost immediately, he dropped to his knees
and began digging around the old field stone threshold; then,
pulling an old coin from the rubble and brushing it off, he ex¬
claimed “It’s a Fugio!” A “Fugio” is a copper penny designed
by Benjamin Franklin and inscribed with a sun and sundial,
the Latin word “fugio” meaning “I fly,” and the English words
“Mind Your Business” – which, combined, are taken to mean
“time flies, do your work.” Now here’s the interesting thing: the
Fugio coin was minted for only one year and that year was 1787,
the year Benjamin Bufford was granted his freedom from inden¬
ture. The fact that Benjamin placed that particular coin beneath
the threshold of the first house he could call his own tells a story
of triumph.

But time, as it turned out, flew too fast and was unkind to
Benjamin. A mere two months and one day after his marriage
to Ruth, he was dead. On the morning of February 27, three
hundred feet from their house, Benjamin was felling trees when

¹⁵¹ All the information in this paragraph comes from Professor Ruth Wallis
Herndon’s research.
one toppled on top of him, breaking his arm and fracturing his skull. Apparently, Benjamin had gone out early to work in the woods and then returned home briefly. Thanks to Sawin’s careful transcription of Ruth’s account of the tragedy, we can hear not only Ruth’s voice, but also Benjamin’s coming to us out of the mists of time:

I went to the door and he said “I have cut one great hemlock, Ruthie, and I mean to cut two or three more by night.” I heard a small tree fall and heard no more and felt no concern until noon. He did not come to dinner and I went in search of him, wading in snow so deep, three feet. I saw the small tree and crept from its top through the limbs to where he had been at work. Saw one axe, but never knew whether I took it to the house. I saw a large dry tree had fallen across the small one. There he was, dead. I went along by it and saw under it a part of one shoulder and [his] hat. I knew no more until I came to Mr. Goss’s door [Reuben Goss was their neighbor to the west; his cellar hole is visible today]. I ran to his house through snow and had, when I arrived, my shoes in my hands. He went and got him out. He said he [Benjamin] must have run twenty feet from where he was chopping and into the way of the old tree which he thought must have fallen by [illegible] of the other.

When Ruth was an old woman, she told Thomas Sawin that Benjamin was “buried in Wendell Center yard and four of my children beside him.” Today, however, there is no stone for any of these five people, suggesting that perhaps their graves were marked – as was often the custom – only with wooden crosses which have long since disappeared.

Benjamin Franklin’s 1787 “Fugio” (refer to text). Its flip side shows thirteen rings, representing the thirteen states, linked together with the inscription “We Are One.”
Sawin tells us that after Bufford’s death, Ruth moved back into the home of her foster father, Josiah Austin. Historical records are silent about the young widow until two-and-a-half years later when, on August 7, 1802, Ruth Holmes Bufford and Joshua Bancroft of Warwick recorded their intention to marry. Ruth was pregnant at that time, and their first child, Elvira Bancroft, was born exactly four months later in Wendell. The Bufford place became the Bancroft place, and when Joshua and Ruth’s second child was born, they named him Benjamin Bufford Bancroft. Over the course of the next twenty-two years, Ruth gave birth to four more girls and six more boys in her Bear Mountain home.

The record makes no note of the joys, other than births, of this very ordinary family, but it does chronicle their losses. In 1818, the Bancrofts sold off fifteen acres of their property, and their four-year-old son, David, died — perhaps of the dysentery that afflicted many in Wendell that year. In 1819, another son, eight-year-old Jonathan, died; in 1822, three-year-old Philinda died and, in 1826, one of their three-year-old twin boys died. Also in 1826, on four separate occasions, Joshua had to sell off more of their property. Finally, in 1830, they sold all their remaining land except for the one acre surrounding their house, but that, too, was eventually sold. In 1840 (when Joshua was sixty-seven and Ruth was sixty-three), the couple was living with their teenage son, the remaining twin, in Erving. That son died in 1844. Then, in August 1847, Joshua Bancroft, age seventy-four and ill with dysentery, passed away. Ruth lived on for two more decades. Some of that time was spent at the Erving home of another son, Jonathan Franklin Bancroft, but at her death, at age ninety-one, in 1868, she was a “town pauper,” owning only $33.41 worth of household furniture.152

When Sawin interviewed Ruth around 1850, he described her as “a cheerful, intelligent lady [who] clearly remembers much of the past seventy-two years.” Finishing up her account of Benjamin’s death, she said, “[Many years after Benjamin’s death] I and my son put up a great stone where he was killed, twenty rods from the road and twenty rods from home.” Elsewhere in her

152 Probate Records for Ruth Bancroft, Franklin County District Court House, Greenfield, Massachusetts.
interview with Sawin, Ruth stated that the spot where she and her son erected this stone was located northeast of the house. Armed with these directions, I went to the site of Ruth’s house, paced off twenty rods (320 feet) to the northeast of the cellar hole and found a stone that looks as if it were placed in an upright position by human, not Nature’s, hands. There are no markings on the stone, so it cannot be said definitively that that is where Benjamin fell and died. Believing so, however, puts a satisfying end to this story.

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Brothers Jonathan (1734–1801) and Daniel (1730–1799) Fiske came from Worcester, Massachusetts, to Wendell in the 1770s. Daniel – who was Thomas Sawin’s uncle – purchased Lot #27 in southern Wendell from Jonathan Jackson in 1776 (this 100-acre property stretched from the intersection of Jennison and Rush Roads south to the present Shutesbury line). One of Daniel’s sons, interviewed by Sawin in the mid-1800s, said that Daniel “came into unbroken woods” when he settled on his Wendell property and that the whole “north declivity of this hill [Rockwell Hill] was covered with a beautiful forest of white pine.” Sawin’s notes include several items taken from Daniel Fiske’s account book, one of which, dated December 25, 1781, shows that he gave “two swine to Stephen Whitney to be paid in Ry [sic] at three shillings a bushel” – an early indication of bartering for goods. Reverend Kilburn’s notes recount the circumstances of Daniel’s death: as he was going to public worship on Thanksgiving Day, 1799, Daniel was seized with a pain in his stomach and had just enough strength to return home “and leave his body in his own house.” He was sixty-nine years old.

Daniel and his wife, Sarah Kendall, were the parents of Zedekiah Fiske (1763–1844) who, as we have seen, joined the Continental Army at sixteen and married Henry Sweetser’s daughter Lucy (1764–1835). In the late 1790s, Lucy was going to Baptist meetings with her sister Betty (aka Mrs. Silas Gates) and, in Sawin’s recounting, Lucy

was much affected and was immersed with two others in 1798, but never left the Church. Her husband was much opposed and at the water, Sawyer’s Pond, kept close to her. When the minister, Elder Smalledge, took her hand, he [Zedekiah] forbid her, saying “If she will go in, she shall go alone.” She did so and was then immersed...She had a life of trouble and died old and bewildered.

153 Ibid.
Part of the trouble in her life must have been the precarious physical or mental health of many of her children—although she died before some of the following events. Stillman died at sixteen, Beulah at thirty-one, Daniel at thirty-four, and Lucy at forty-three. An added tragedy was that not one, but three of her sons were afflicted with "insanity." The following was found in Sawin's notes. It is copied from an undated article in the Springfield Republican:

Henry Fisk, a town pauper of Wendell, was found dead on Dry Hill in Montague on August 14 by some persons who were huckleberrying. He left the town farm in Wendell on 15 of April to visit his sister, Mrs. Lucy Gunn, in Montague since which time nothing had been heard from him. [To this, Sawin makes the following addition: It is probable that he committed suicide upon the day he left the Almshouse, his bundle, coat and knife having been found ¼ mile from his remains...He was afflicted with alternations of melancholy and maniacal excitement. He came to the poor house in the preceding fall from long wanderings in New York or elsewhere. He has a brother, Zedekiah, insane in Ohio and his brother, Kendall, died insane, a pauper in Wendell a few years ago.]

Kendall, a cripple, had died in the Wendell almshouse in 1842. Henry's death occurred in 1861, and Zedekiah II died in 1867.

Returning to Daniel's brother, Jonathan Fiske, historian Everts said that "J. Fiske" was Wendell's first physician, and Sawin's notes inform us that "Dr. Jonathan Fiske, father of Jonas" bought a place on Leach’s (later Orcutt) Hill. Jonathan Fiske married Abigail Locke—although that may have been a second marriage. The only other information regarding Jonathan and Abigail comes from Reverend Kilburn’s notes: Abigail died in Wendell in 1792, while Jonathan lived until March 25, 1801, when he died suddenly "of lethargy or apoplexy" at age sixty-seven. Kilburn said that as Dr. Fiske was dying, "Dr. Morton gave him a puke" which, the Reverend added, was "tho’t not to be a good practice."154
The story of the Fiske family continues into the next generation with Dr. Jonathan Fiske’s children, Jonas being perhaps the most significant. Jonas married Matilda Leach in 1790, and Sawin says in those early years they lived on Orcutt Hill in front of his father’s house. Jonas was one of the founders of the Baptist Church in 1799. Then, in 1805, he built the lovely house and sprawling barn that stood for 150 years next to the pond (Fiske Pond) near the Shutesbury line until an arsonist burned it to the ground in the mid-1960s. Sawin mistakenly credits Jonas’s son, Artemas, with building this house in 1826, but family tradition and a newspaper article\textsuperscript{155} support the 1805 date. The sawmill and dam on the pond behind the house may have been built earlier, Sawin thought, by one of the Bent family living on West Street. Jonas and Matilda had six children on their family farm: Joseph (1791), Martin (1795), Rebecca (1797), Stephen (1799), Artemas (1802), and Lyman (1805).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{farm-at-fiske-pond-built-by-jonas-fiske-1805}
\caption{Farm at Fiske Pond built by Jonas Fiske, 1805. Painted by James Franklin Gilman circa 1910. Photograph courtesy of Mrs. Elizabeth Peirce, Swift River Valley Historical Society.}
\end{figure}

At mid-century, the youngest of Jonas’s children, Lyman, lived on Orcutt Hill with his brother Artemas, their sister Rebecca, Hiram Willis (Rebecca’s illegitimate son), Joseph Wilder (a

\textsuperscript{155} Enterprise and Journal, March 12, 1953, no page number available.
boarder), and Emma Fiske (Stephen Fiske's daughter who died in 1864 at age twenty). Sawin's allegation of Hiram Willis's illegitimacy is supported by marriage and death records for Willis which – in the space allotted for both parents' names – give only his mother's name: Rebecca Fiske. Additionally, although there were no men in Wendell by the last name of Willis around the time of Hiram's birth in 1825, a clue to the identity of Hiram's father comes from the fact that Rebecca's eldest brother, Joseph Fiske, married a woman by the name of Martha "Polly" Willis of Leverett. Polly had two brothers, one older and one younger than Rebecca Fiske, and it is a reasonable assumption that it was the older one, Samuel Willis, Jr., who was, in fact, Hiram's father. Sawin's notes say that Lyman adopted his sister's illegitimate son, and this he seems to have done whole-heartedly as shown by the fact that they were in business together for many years. Lyman and Hiram owned a sawmill, the Fiske & Willis Mill, located on the east side of Cooleyville Road. (There is still, today, a trail that runs from the remains of that mill up to the site of the old Fiske home on Orcutt hill.) The 1858 Walling Map shows that Hiram Willis also had an "oil distillery" business across the road from the sawmill at that time. This distillery may have used an extraction process to obtain rosin-oil from the dead wood of pine trees. Rosin-oil was used in making varnish, soap, and soldering flux; it was also used on violin bows. The other possibility – that Willis's distillery was used for making linseed oil from flax seeds – seems less likely in that Hiram and Lyman were in the lumber business and had access to so much wood. Lyman is described as "industrious, but slow" (Sawin did note, however, that he "reads"!), and all the Fiskes living on Orcutt Hill were thought by Sawin to be "Sabbath-breakers."

Stephen Fiske, Lyman's older brother, also a sawmill owner, lived on the family farm at the pond with his wife, Elsie, and their five children. Stephen received a high rating from Sawin as a "sober and steady" man.

Joseph, the first of Jonas Fiske's children, husband of Polly Willis, lived and farmed across the street from Daniel Ballard's homestead on Jennison Road and earned his living by making chairs and shingles. Sawin says that he was a Baptist and described him
as “feeble, busy and reliable.” In an 1857 interview, Joseph told Sawin the following story about his uncle Abijah (b. 1777), son of Daniel and Sarah Fiske:

He [Abijah] was a man of iron constitution and exposed himself to unnecessary hardships. Out in all weather. Would go out when clearing the land east of Mr. Wyeth’s house and chop till his clothes were wet by rain and then throw off all his clothes and work with all his might till night...[He was also] the leader in frolics. Once at the house of Nathaniel Wilder with young people he found a three-legged stool in the corner and, mounting it, stood upon his head; but slipping therefrom his head struck the floor and nearly killed him.

Joseph’s second cousin (son of Lucy Sweetser and Zedekiah Fiske), Joseph Fiske II, made his home with his wife and children next door to the Sawin family on Rockwell Hill Road and was characterized as “a solid man of few words.” On the 1860 agricultural census, he is shown as owning 220 acres of improved land and doing well for himself (although only half as well as Daniel Ballard).

Matilda Leach Fiske, mother of Joseph and all his siblings, died of influenza in 1847, and Jonas, the patriarch, died of old age three years later. Rebecca, who remained single after the birth of her illegitimate child, died of a “bowel complaint” in 1856; Lyman continued with his successful sawmill operation, dying in Wendell in 1892; brothers Artemas and Joseph both died of old age in 1882; and Stephen stayed on at the family homestead on Fiske Pond where he operated his saw and shingle mill until his death in 1893 when it passed to his son, Alburn (1849–1908), and later still, to Alburn’s son, Alvin (1877–1966) – or “Allie,” as he was called. Allie Fiske ran the farm and, like his forefathers, operated a logging business until the early 1920s when he switched over to dairying exclusively. His wife, Mabel Proctor Richards (1872–1954), had three children by a prior marriage and was for two decades the postmistress for Locke’s Village. Allie and Mabel had no children of their own.

(Photograph courtesy of Elizabeth Peirce.)

Elizabeth Peirce, curator, genealogist, and historian at the Swift River Valley Historical Society, is the daughter of Cecil Stiles Ballou and granddaughter of Allie and Mabel Fiske; she provided much helpful information and photographs for this account. Although Mrs. Peirce’s memories are of an era much later than the scope of this work, they bear inclusion lest they be lost to time. When she was a child, Elizabeth and her two brothers, Derrill and Richard, would visit Allie and Mabel every summer for a week or two. Both the post-office and a general store occupied a long, narrow room at the back of the house where, Mrs. Peirce remembers, a large moose head hung on a wall. Mabel had terrible varicose veins, and when she was forced to stay off her feet, she would ask her grandchildren to come up to the farm. Allie often took the boys fishing, and Mabel let the kids have saltines and ginger ale before they went to bed. On the farm, there were chickens, dairy cows, draft horses, and a vegetable garden. One summer, Elizabeth attended Camp Anderson next door, and she and a few friends would often walk up to the farm to get eggs and milk for the camp. People who stopped by for a visit with Allie and Mabel were always invited to stay for dinner. A man named Kurt Tucker faithfully delivered the Sunday paper, managing to arrive with it
just in time for supper; when asked to join the family at the table, he inevitably replied, “Don’t mind if I do.” The pond, then, was not much more than a mud hole full of bloodsuckers, and Allie never used it for anything. One day, Mabel went outside after lunch and, as Mrs. Peirce tells it, her hip “just broke.” Mabel went back inside and finished the lunch dishes before collapsing. She never fully recovered from this. After Mabel’s death, Allie had a live-in care-taker, and he removed to Northfield. He was alive, but not at the family home, when it burned down. A glowing tribute was paid to Mr. Fiske by his neighbor, Broadus Mitchell, who described Allie as a hard-working, friendly, and humorous man, full of country and ecological wisdom. Allie and Mabel are buried in South Cemetery along with eight of their relatives. Seven other Fiske family members rest in Center Cemetery.

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156 Broadus Mitchell, “Alvin Fiske,” in Mitchell’s daughter’s collection of his papers.
A recent gift to the Wendell Historical Society is a red leather gentleman’s wallet that once belonged to Charles Hager. The four-by-seven-inch wallet or “pocketbook” would have fit neatly into the inside pocket of a man’s coat, and it still contains a slim pencil, worn down by use, in its folds. The donor, Adrian Montagano, artist and long-time resident of Wendell, had for many years a close relationship with Charles Hager’s great-granddaughter Fanny Hager, and it was she who gave him the wallet with an identifying note in it. Interestingly, Benjamin Franklin carried an identical wallet, and his, in much worse shape than Hager’s, is now owned by the Phillips Museum of Art in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Charles Hager’s red leather wallet or “pocketbook.”

Charles Hager’s parents, Martin and Hannah Fairbanks Hagar (the spelling of the family name changed with Martin’s children) from Marlborough, Massachusetts, purchased eighty acres in Wendell in 1806. Their property straddled the east and west sides of Wendell Depot Road north of Captain Josiah Osgood’s property, or what is today the Kemsley Academy. The bulk of their land lay on the east side of the road, abutting the Ministerial Lot, #28 on the 1800 Map, but Martin Hagar built his house in 1807 on the west side of the road, according to Sawin. (Today, that old, two-chimneyed Cape at #397 Wendell Depot Road – altered with the addition of modern doors and windows – is abandoned, but still standing.) During the War of 1812, Martin was sent with fourteen other Wendell men for the defense of Boston in case of
a British attack. His civic engagement included serving as selectman from 1823 to 1826 and, for a short while, as a member of the Legislature,\textsuperscript{157} but he seems to have dedicated himself, for the most part, to running a successful and profitable farm.

Martin and Hannah’s son Charles was born at the family home on October 9, 1809. As a child, Charles attended one of the “common” schools in Wendell for twelve weeks each winter, but soon enough his help was required full-time on his father’s farm. He appears to have absorbed himself in this work and did not marry until he was twenty-nine years old, when Myra Holden Felton of New Salem became his bride. One year later, circumstances necessitated his take-over of his father’s farm. A legal document signed on Christmas Day, 1839,\textsuperscript{158} gave all Martin’s farm and household possessions, including the property itself, to Charles in exchange for Charles’s support of Martin and Hannah for the rest of their lives. Although it can’t be known for certain, it is possible that Martin, who was sixty-one at that date, suffered from the same hereditary affliction (peripheral vascular disease) that years later caused Charles to lose the use of his legs and, later still, handicapped both Charles’s grandson and great-granddaughter Fanny.

Included in the list of items transferred to Charles by that document were: “1 yearling colt, 1 pair of oxen, 1 pair of two-year-old steers, 3 cows, 3 last spring calves and 1 swine, also all my farming tools of all kinds [and] all my household furniture.”\textsuperscript{159} Charles’s descendants own a hand-written list of tools and equipment that they believe accompanied the document; included are two harrows, three horse sleds, one long sleigh, one short sleigh, three lumber wagons, one plow, one grindstone, one mowing machine and, significantly, “tobacco sash” valued at $74.80,\textsuperscript{160} the highest dollar amount on the list, which today translates into almost $2,000.

These lists, and particularly the mention of “tobacco sash,” provide valuable information about how the Hager farm may

\textsuperscript{157} Everts, History of the Connecticut Valley, 608.
\textsuperscript{158} Hager family papers owned by Bill Hager of Windham, Maine.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid.
have operated. Many stacks of tobacco sash or cold-frames made up an important part of the specialized equipment of a tobacco farm. Tiny tobacco seeds, mixed with the dust of rotten wood to provide bulk and retain moisture, were started inside. Once they sprouted, the seeds were sown outside in prepared, often hot-water sterilized, beds that were covered with cold-frames or “sash” in order to give the tender seedlings a protected environment in which to grow. The farmer had to watch the weather carefully, opening the frames in a hot spell and closing, even covering, them if there was a threat of frost. Tobacco, especially the kind used as wrappers for fine cigars, was and still is widely grown in the rich soil of the Connecticut River valley, but neither the mid-nineteenth century non-population schedules nor any other source indicates that tobacco was ever raised in Wendell. It is, of course, possible that the hand-written list of tools dates to a later time, after the family moved to Deerfield. (Current Wendell resident Martha Senn says, however, that “old-timer” Donny Ellis told her that tobacco was once grown in Wendell.) The sleds, sleighs, and lumber wagons listed on the hand-written sheet show that the Hagers were also involved in the lumber business. In this, of course, they were not unique. Lumbering was one of the chief – if not the primary – means of making “good” money in Wendell until most of its hills were stripped bare.

In 1848, Charles’s mother, Hannah, died. In 1850, Charles estimated the value of his farm at $2,500 – nearly the same amount as prosperous Samuel Brewer’s farm was worth. He grew peas and beans, oats, barley, potatoes, and corn and harvested twenty tons of hay per year. A few years later, when Myra’s father relocated to Deerfield, Charles bought a property near him on Sugarloaf Mountain and moved his wife, five children, and elderly father there. The move may have proved too much for Martin because he died soon afterwards in 1855. (Although his wife was buried in Wendell’s Center Cemetery, he did not join her there. In fact, there is no record of Martin’s burial anywhere.) Then,

in 1857, Charles purchased his father-in-law’s farm in Deerfield for $4,000. Charles and Myra made extensive improvements to the house and added another 100 acres to the property – which, along with his previous purchase of the Sugarloaf property, point to the Hager farms in both Wendell and Deerfield as having been very lucrative businesses for the family. Esteemed by his fellow citizens, Charles was elected selectman in 1872, and he may have been equally esteemed by his family because all his sons, married with families of their own, lived on or near their father’s farm. Charles was confined to a wheelchair for a time before his death in 1890. Myra died in 1895.

Genealogical Note:
Charles Hager’s sister Hannah Morse Hager (1815–1849) married Silas Bullard II (1800–1882), whose family lived on Bullard Road. Silas was the son of Silas Bullard I and Experience Orcutt, and, at mid-century, he owned his father’s 170-acre homestead. (See the story of Elijah Clark under “Clark Family.”).
WAR OF 1812

and Ephraim Sawyer

Opposition to another war with the British was strong in New England, and “Massachusetts was by far the most virulent in antiwar sentiment.” Talk of secession resounded throughout the state. It comes as no surprise then that Wendell, too, was opposed to this second American Revolution, as it has been called. When delegates from fifty-three towns in western Massachusetts were called to convene in Northampton in July 1812, Wendell sent Joshua Green as its representative. These delegates signed a petition delivered to then-President Madison declaring the war to be “neither just, necessary, nor expedient” and urged him to quickly reach a peace settlement. Despite this, the town had resolved four months earlier that “powder and balls should be provided for the soldiers when inspected,” and in the fall of 1814, when Boston was threatened by a British invasion and Governor Caleb Strong called for a volunteer militia, Wendell sent at least eleven men to aid in the defense of the city. All were in Captain Asa Powers’ Company, Lt. Col. T. Longley’s Regiment, raised at New Salem and in service from September 13 through November 7. They were:

- Lieut. Silas Osgood
- Corporal Thomas Walkup
- Martin Fisk, Private
- Joseph Needham, Private
- Amos Scranton, Private
- Silas Whitcomb, rank unknown
- Sgt. William Putnam
- William Farr, rank unknown
- Martin Hager, Private
- Luther Osgood, Private
- Willard Thompson, Private

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164 Everts, History of the Connecticut Valley, 783.
165 Ibid.
166 Heidler, Encyclopedia, 9.
As events turned out, Boston was not attacked by the British, and the men from Wendell were able to return home without further ado.

Oddly, the name of Ephraim Sawyer is not found on any list of men from Massachusetts who served in the War of 1812, yet Sawin’s and Reverend Kilburn’s notes state otherwise. Sawyer came to Wendell with his second wife (Sarah Houghton), his sons, Ephraim II and Israel, and his daughters, Lucy and Catherine, in 1799. In January of that year, he paid $750 for 101 acres on Bear Mountain (Lot #10), one lot over from the Bufford/Bancroft homestead. The following year, he built his house and barn there on a knoll set back from the road and above a small creek. It appears, however, that Sawyer had a difficult time eking out a living. In 1810, he sold some of his acreage; in 1811, he took out a mortgage on his property; and, in May 1813, he sold all but an acre-and-a-half of his land to his sons. Then, although his name does not appear on any military records of the time, Sawin says that he joined in the fight against the British. He did not live long. Less than a month after selling his land to his sons, he was dead. Adding to the family’s grief, daughter Catherine followed her father to the grave a mere two months later. Reverend Kilburn’s notes for August 24, 1813, read as follows:

Catherine (Katy) Sawyer, aged nineteen, daughter of Ephraim Sawyer by his first wife. He died June 7 at Sackett’s Harbor. The funeral of the father and his youngest daughter this day attended.169

Sawin’s notes read differently:

Ephraim Sawyer built his house in 1800. He went off in the last war, wounded [this word has a line across it] at Plattsburg returning from fatigue service, took up a bottle of medicine and being dry or rum-thirsty drank his death. A basket worker few days at the last [sic].

While Sacket’s Harbor is almost two hundred miles distant from Plattsburgh, both played a role in the War of 1812, and therefore Sawyer’s death could have occurred in either place. Equally unclear is whether Sawyer’s death was self-inflicted. What is certain,  

169 Kilburn, Journal.
though, is that Ephraim Sawyer of Wendell served in this unpopular war. How fitting then that, exactly two centuries later, before any of this story had been put together, a metal detector scan of the ruins of Sawyer's property uncovered, next to his well, a one-cent coin with the date “1812” clearly marked on it.

**Genealogical note:**
Family history regarding Ephraim Sawyer I is scant and incomplete at best. Deep digging is required. He was born to Elizabeth and Aholiab Sawyer of Lancaster on November 20, 1749, in Bolton, Massachusetts. He married first Margaret (Peggy) Fisher, had at least four children with her, and married second Sarah Houghton on January 16, 1799, in Templeton. Ephraim Sawyer II (b. 1785) bought two acres in Erving in 1807, married Phoebe Woods of Warwick in March, 1813, had a son (Ephraim Warren Sawyer) in 1814, and died in 1818, at age thirty-three. (Phoebe Woods's father, Charles Woods, is buried in Mormon Hollow Cemetery.)
John Metcalf II may well have been Wendell's most successful entrepreneur – or, at least, its most well known. He ran a printing office in this town for twenty years (1812–1832), publishing dozens of tiny children’s chapbooks, several almanacs and maps, a full-length book (The Miscellaneous Works of...Richard Baxter), and Gauthier’s Romance of a Mummy translated from the French by Anne T. Wilbur Wood (born in Wendell in 1817, daughter of Reverend Kilburn’s replacement, Reverend Hervey Wilbur; see “Subsequent Pastors.”) He is perhaps most recognized for the chapbooks he printed. Some are small (3”x 5”) and some, like Jack Halyard and Ishmael Bardus, owned by the Wendell Library, are so tiny (2”x 3”) as to be referred to as “toy books.” The chapbooks with wood-cuts, some of which are hand-colored, all taught moral virtues to their readers. Today they are collectors’ items and can be found in special collections at both UMass/Amherst and Rutgers University. Parenthetically, Thomas Sawin served as a printer’s apprentice in Amherst from 1829 to 1831, years when Metcalf’s printing business was in full swing in Wendell. Why Sawin chose not to apprentice with Metcalf is unknown.

John Metcalf’s father, John Metcalf I, of Medway, Massachusetts, married Hannah Clark whose mother, Julia Bullard, a sister of Silas Bullard, had grown up in Medway, but moved to Wendell
at the time of her marriage to Elijah Clark (see “Clark Family”). This no doubt played a major part in Metcalf’s decision to move his young family to Wendell. Land records show that this first John Metcalf bought property from George W. Erving on October 24, 1793.\footnote{Book 6, Page 283, Franklin Co. Registry of Deeds.}

John Metcalf II, born in Barre in 1788, was five years old the year his father bought his Wendell land, thus he spent his formative years in Wendell. Later, in his teens, John II apprenticed to Andrew Wright, publisher of the \textit{Republican Spy} in Northampton. And in the fall of 1810, land records show that twenty-two year old John Metcalf II, “a printer residing in Greenfield,” paid $655 for the purchase of the sixty-five-acre “farm whereon Dille Whitcomb last lived.”\footnote{Book 28, Page 26, Franklin Co. Registry of Deeds.} (This property lies on the north side of Stone Road, off of Wendell Depot Road, a few hundred feet west of the power lines. Ancient sugar maples still line the old driveway.) Sawin says that prior to Metcalf’s purchase, Dille Whitcomb, aged forty-two, had “hanged himself by a rope in his barn, having been under a peculiar depression in regard to his debts for about two months past.” The inquest jury’s verdict was insanity. Dille was buried on July 13, 1808, after which his widow sold the place to Bezaliel Locke and Clark Stone who, in turn, sold it to John Metcalf II. In 1820, John II was married and living with his wife, four children under the age of ten, and a man and a woman over the age of forty-five who were no doubt his parents. Although I cannot find a record of his marriage, it must have taken place around 1810 – the year he purchased Whitcomb’s property – in order for his wife to have birthed four children by 1820. Two years after buying the house, John set up his own printing shop in Wendell which, Sawin says, he built on land about a quarter of a mile further southwest on Stone Road. John II’s printing presses produced many volumes of books in Wendell for two solid decades and, from 1826–1832, John also shouldered the responsibility of Town Clerk. Then, in 1832, he packed up his business and his family and moved to Northampton.
Of John’s wife, we know only that her first name was Martha and that she gave birth to eight children, but some of these did not survive. In fact, the family met with many losses: in 1827, children Charles and Susan died and were buried in Center Cemetery; one year later, John II’s father died and was buried alongside his grandchildren; and in 1834, two years after John II moved his business to Northampton, his oldest son, John Metcalf III, drowned in Wendell and was put to rest with his siblings and grandfather. Sawin’s notes raise the question of suicide. He says that on May 2, 1834, “John Metcalf [III] of Northampton, residing in Wendell, age twenty-three, drowned, suspected purposely by himself as there was great chance of escape.” John III’s coffin was built by Levi Stone whose fee for it was $2.00.\footnote{Stone, Account Book, 1815–1839.}

John II remained active in the printing trade until his death at age seventy-six in Northampton. In his obituary, he was remembered for his “tenacious observance of accuracy in his business [which] gave him a good name for reliability, which he ever maintained. He was a quiet, unassuming man, thoroughly honest, prompt and always trustworthy. He has left a good proof of his pages of life.”\footnote{Daily Hampshire Gazette, August 9, 1864, http://www.newspapers.com.} Two of his sons, William and Lyman, took their father’s printing firm into the next century.

\textit{Genealogical Note:}

The children of printer John Metcalf II and his wife, Martha, were:

John, born 1811 (also supporting the supposition of an 1810 marriage date for his parents)
Clark, born 1814 Charles, born 1823
Lewis, born 1816 Susan, born 1825
Lyman, born 1818 William, born 1828
Henry, born 1821

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\footnote{Stone, Account Book, 1815–1839.}
\footnote{Daily Hampshire Gazette, August 9, 1864, http://www.newspapers.com.}
LUTHER BAKER

Luther Baker was born in Hubbardston, Massachusetts, in 1804 and came to Wendell with two young children after the death of his wife in 1834. A year later, he married Polly Locke (1808–1864), daughter of Bezaliel Locke and Olive Fiske. They set up residence on what is now Wendell Depot Road (more or less across from #139) on a site that had been occupied in the early 1780s by a school. Luther was a farmer and a cooper, a member of the Wendell Baptist Church and, according to Sawin, “ignorant, but truthful.” With Luther’s two children and the seven Polly bore him, there were eleven mouths to feed.

Tragedy struck in 1853 when their two-year old son, Nelson, died of pleurisy and again, six months later, when their twenty-two-year old daughter, Olive, died of consumption. For the next decade, their lives appear to have proceeded fairly routinely – with the exception of three of their boys enlisting to fight in the Civil War. Edward was nineteen and worked on the family’s farm, David was a twenty-three-year-old chair maker, and George was thirty-one, also a chair maker, and married. George, described on his enlistment papers as five feet, five inches tall with sandy hair, suffered a bullet wound to his abdomen at Drury’s Bluff and died on May 17, 1864 at Point of Rocks in Frederick, Maryland. His death was followed by a string of others in the family, leaving it decimated several months later. The matriarch, Polly, died on June 20 at fifty-five of congestion of the lungs, and Luther died on July 2 of a liver complaint. Eleven days later, twenty-six-year-old David died of the dysentery he had contracted in the army. On July 22, only two months after George Baker’s death from a bullet wound, his two-year-old son died. Finally, on September 4, twenty-five-year-old Hannah, a school teacher suffering from the dysentery that caused her brother David’s death, died of it. They are all buried in South Cemetery, and the obelisk engraved in their memory is a poignant reminder of the fragility of life.

The surviving family members were two girls and two boys: Rowena (1836–1926), Andrew (1841–1913), Edward (1844–
1938), and Mary, born in 1846. Andrew Baker attended New Salem Academy for one year, did not serve in the Civil War and in 1864, the year of his father’s death, married Ellen Stone, daughter of Luther Stone, and bought his father’s old homestead on Wendell Depot Road where he worked as a cooper. The following year he and Ellen moved across from her father on Farley Road, and Andrew turned to agriculture. He was active in local and state politics and, for several decades, served Wendell as selectman, assessor, overseer of the poor, and treasurer. After his father-in-law’s death in 1888, Andrew settled into life as the proprietor of Luther’s lumbering business, home, and property where Farley Road and Mormon Hollow Road split. He was also a member and treasurer of the Wendell Congregational Church, a charter member of Wendell Grange, and a member of the Montague Lodge of Masons. Of an even and genial disposition, he had the reputation of being a fair and just businessman. His son Ozro took over Andrew’s business after Andrew’s death at age seventy-one, and he became involved in a political “scandal” in Wendell in the 1930s (see “Charles M. Ballou”).

Edward Baker, Andrew’s brother, enlisted in the Navy in February of 1863 and served for fifteen months on the USS Colorado, the gunboat USS Calhoun, and the USS Pensacola. Most of his war experience was spent on the Mississippi River and in the blockade of Mobile, Alabama. He returned to Wendell at the end of the war and married Harriet Morgan of Connecticut in 1870. In Wendell, Millers Falls, Fitchburg, and North Orange, he had a versatile career as a teamster, farmer, carpenter, and mill hand. He spent his last year living in Millers Falls with his nephew Ozro D. Baker. He died at age ninety-two.

Rowena and Mary seem to have left no trace of themselves.

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174 Leading Citizens of Franklin County, 547.
175 Leading Citizens of Franklin County, 548.
176 New Salem Academy, New Salem Reunion Banner, August 21, 1913, 40.
177 All of the information about Edward Baker comes from a collection of newspaper clippings, including his obituary, found in a homemade scrapbook from the 1930s at the Wendell Library.
In June 2014, the Baptist church in Leverett found and gave to the Wendell Historical Society copies of the minutes taken at annual meetings of the Wendell Baptist Association from 1841 to 1861. The 1857 and 1858 minutes are particularly valuable because they contain “circular letters” which give a history of the Baptist church in Wendell and show that the real beginnings of that church happened some six years prior to its official organization on June 11, 1799:

*It is supposed that the difficulty in the town with the Rev. Abraham Hill, pastor of the Congregational Church who was a “Tory,” and whose attachment to the Crown gave great offense to many of the inhabitants, had something to do with the establishment of Baptist meetings in this place on account of their dislike to him; but to what extent we are now not able to state. The first Baptist in town [Wendell] is supposed to be Samuel Caswell…baptized in 1793. The next year Patience Potter and David Boynton were baptized.*

Sawin, who was the secretary of the Baptist church for several decades, reported that in 1793 meetings were held at the house of “brother Boynton” on the eastern side of the town. David Boynton (b.1744) had built his house in 1789 about half-way down what is today Gate Lane; Patience (Boynton) Potter (b.1751) – mother of Annie Clark and, after Robert Potter’s death, wife of Benjamin Death – was his sister. Samuel Caswell (II) was born in Wendell in 1774 to Samuel and Sarah Caswell. Before long, the Baptists moved the location of their meetings to the “old east school house.”

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178 Minutes of the 34th Anniversary of the Wendell Baptist Association, September 22 & 23, 1858, (Northampton: Metcalf & Company, 1858), 12. (Note that the printer was Wendell’s own John Metcalf.) Available at the Wendell Library.

179 Sawin does not specify exactly which school house this was. His maps show only the locations of schools, marked with the word “school,” sometimes followed by a number.
Then, “in 1797, there appears to have been an extensive revival in Shutesbury, in which the brethren in Wendell shared largely, [going] on horseback and on foot, a distance of five or seven miles to Shutesbury.” During this revival, which extended into the following year, fifty-five new members were baptized into the church. “This was the revival that spread into Wendell, when the seed was sown which afterwards so richly vegetated in the growth and prosperity of the church in that town.”

By 1799, twenty-six Wendell members of the Shutesbury church received permission to form their own church in Wendell; they were David Boynton, Foxwell Thomas, Aaron Fisher I, Aaron Fisher II, Jonas Fiske, Ephraim Locke, Jason Phillips, Cornelius Moore, Jabez Sawyer, “and seventeen women.”

It was not, however, until 1819 that a meetinghouse, “an unostentatious temple,” was erected one half mile east of the Common. (The remains of this church can be seen today by stepping into the woods where Morse Village Road joins with New Salem Road. Within the outline of the foundation lies a large round hole, sided with stones; Sylvia Wetherby, who owns the land, suggests that this may have been the pool in which people were baptized as members of the church.) Twenty-five years later, when the Congregationalists built their new meetinghouse, the Baptists followed suit. There is a persistent rumor in town that the old Baptist church was moved by oxen to its present location on the south side of the Common, but Sawin’s notes, the Baptist Association’s minutes, and an interview with Wendell native Bert Goddard (no longer alive) make clear that the church was dismantled in the late summer of 1845 and that all its parts were taken to the southeast end of the Common. Then, “by the persevering energy of George B. Richardson, the materials were rebuilt [emphasis mine] by the next June, with the addition of a vestibule...

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181 WBA Minutes 1858, 13.
182 Everts, History of the Connecticut Valley, 785.
183 WBA Minutes 1857, 17.
and a steple [sic]...The house was dedicated July 4, 1846, in the forenoon.\footnote{WBA Minutes 1857, 17.} George B. Richardson, for the record, was born in 1801 and married Levina Sawyer, daughter of Jabez Sawyer and Jemima Carruth. (See “Smallpox Cemetery.”) He was a chair maker in Wendell from 1825 to 1855, a selectman in 1841, a deacon of the Baptist church in 1845, and town clerk from 1846 to 1851. He not only reconstructed the Baptist church, but also donated the site of its new location to them – with the proviso that if there should be no preaching service at the church for twenty years, the land and building would then revert to him or his estate. Sawin’s map of the center of town shows Richardson living in a house he built at the corner of Locke’s Village Road and the Common (#2 Center Street). His chair maker’s shop stood between his house and the newly rebuilt Baptist church.

The pastors of the Wendell Baptist Church are listed below and all quoted remarks are taken from the circular letter attached to the minutes of the 1857 annual meeting.

1800–1802: Brother Ezra Kendall, “a powerful speaker,” who moved on to the now extinct town of Dana (one of the towns taken by eminent domain and submerged with the creation of the Quabbin Reservoir).

1802–1812: Elder Samuel King from Sutton. The Church seemed to be at its height during his tenure, encompassing at least three periods of “revival.” In 1806, fourteen were baptized, in 1810–11, seventeen, and in 1812, five, before he left on a mission to New York and Pennsylvania from which he never returned. He died on October 1, 1812 from “a fever.” (See below for details from his diary.)

1814–1841: Elder David Goddard from Cambridge. He came to Wendell about 1810 to pursue his business as a mechanic. When the Baptists were left leaderless after Elder King’s death, Goddard began helping out by preaching at meetings. In 1814, he was ordained pastor of the Wendell Baptist Church. During the revival of 1830, twenty-one people were baptized on one day, and forty more were added during the year. But, for the last ten years of his tenure, there was much discouragement: “Large drafts were
made on the body by emigration, and the Erving members were dismissed to form the church in South Orange. This, together with the sad decline of piety, served greatly to discourage both pastor and people.” He had two sons who followed in his ministerial footsteps. (See “Reverends David and Josiah Goddard” below.)

1841-1844: Reverend Aaron Burbank. While he was pastor, the church made “a fruitless attempt to unite with the Congregational church.”

1844-1846: Elder L. Fay. He did not live in Wendell, and he preached only half-time. It was during his tenure that the decision was made to relocate the house of worship to the center of town.

1846-1851: Reverend William Leach. “During his ministry, the church experienced both sunshine and clouds. One season of special refreshing was enjoyed, and eight were baptized, but the church was rapidly becoming feeble by emigration, which with want of harmony, induced the pastor to leave.”

1852-1854: Reverend Norman Clark. “He walked with them softly and in love...and baptized nine willing converts who still hold on their way.” Sawin described Reverend Clark as “affectionate and gentle, but unskillful in thought and unimpressive in words.” (What, if any, relationship Reverend Clark bore to the other Clark families in town has not been discovered.)


1864: At some point the Baptists stopped meeting and the building stood vacant for a long time until, finally, with no preacher or preaching service for twenty years, the property reverted, per the conditions of the gift, to the estate of George B. Richardson. Selectman Charles Ballou bought it from Richardson’s estate and, in 1919, he sold it to the town and the building was converted into Town Hall (see “Charles M. Ballou”).

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REVEREND SAMUEL D. KING
Second Baptist Preacher in Wendell, and his Diary

Samuel King, son of William and Silence King, was born in 1760 in Sutton, Massachusetts. At age seventeen and serving as a soldier in the Revolutionary War, he began a diary which he kept for about three decades. By good fortune, that diary has survived, but it is short on facts relating to Samuel’s personal life. Vital Records show that Samuel married Ruth Marble in 1790 and that she died in 1799. Although many sources claim they had no children, Sawin says there were three: Dwight, who went to Lunenburg; Polly, who became Mrs. Ezekial Stiles and went to Wisconsin; and Ruth, who married their Wendell neighbor, Elihu Osgood. In 1802-3, King relocated with his parents, his young children, and at least one brother to Wendell and took up his job as preacher of the Baptist Church, although he was not officially installed as pastor until 1806. His deceased wife’s sister kept house for him and helped raise his children.

King’s diary records his Wendell days in one and two line entries which tell primarily of his pastoral visits and where and what he preached, giving Bible chapter and verse. Sometimes he included a weather report or told of chores around the homestead, and occasionally he noted exceptional events. It was not unusual for him to travel on church-related missions to Orange, Warwick, Leverett, Hadley, Royalston, and beyond. Of King, Sawin says he “was a very efficient shepherd, but not so great a preacher. Almost [always] after his day’s work and taking tea, he would ride to some house and make a pastoral call, often in most remote part of town or New Salem.” Here are some of King’s usual – and not so usual – entries:\n\n186 King, Diary, 1777–1812.
1803, January 1: visited at Lieut. Orcutt’s.
    January 2: visited at Deacon Osgood’s.
    January 5: visited at Mr. Rockwood’s; lodged at Mr. Wyeth’s.
    December 19: chimney falls down in part. Rebuilt it.
    December 20: killed my swine.

1804, January 4: a fine snow falls in town.
    January 15: Jabez Sawyer helps me get up wood.
    January 18: very cold, snow drifts very much.
    January 19: work at breaking out, still cold.
    March 2: a terrible driving snow.
    March 7: felled a great ash tree.
    March 8: get up some of it [the tree]; I count 276 grains in ye 2nd cut of an ash tree.
    March 19: very cold; I am unwell.
    July 25: finish haying.
    August 22: raise an addition to my house.
    August 30: Dwight [King’s son] was thrown about 9 o’clock. Dr. Porter came at 10 and Dr. Ball at 1PM. Mr. Ewers set off at half-past 2 for Dr. Prentice. [After this entry, King spends about six pages giving an account of Dwight’s slow recovery from the head wound he received. Details include the boy’s aches and pains, the food he took (including squirrel meat) and the medicine administered, sometimes as much as 30 drops of laudanum (tincture of opium).]
    September 10: ride to Orange with my father and brother.
    December 25: have hands to get wood, viz. Brother Elihu Osgood’s son with 2 pair cattle, Mr. J. Sawyer 1 pair oxen; I cut my foot.

1805, January 3: have hands to get up wood, viz. Deacon Osgood’s son with a pair of cattle, Brother Josiah Osgood’s oxen, Mr. Atherton’s son with 2 pair cattle and Mr. Boynton.

1806, January 13: attended ye funeral of Brother Locke’s infant.
    January 26: very mild all ye week.
    May 5: ride to Northampton to visit the poor convicts, return to Hadley mills and preach from Isaiah, 40:31.
    May 19: prayer meeting at my house at 5 o’clock.
June 5: attended at ye execution of Dominick Daly [sic] and James Halligan. Their priest preached from 1 John, 3:15, 1st clause. What a solemn transaction. O that God may bless it to the good of me and others.

Regarding this last entry, it is well documented that on that day two Irish immigrants from Boston, Dominic Daley and James Halligan, were hanged in Northampton. The preceding November, the body of a young farmer named Marcus Lyon was found on a road near Wilbraham, and a call was put out for the capture of the criminal(s) with the offer of a $500 reward. Daley and Halligan, who were traveling to New Haven, were soon picked up, arrested, and charged with highway robbery and murder – despite the fact that they had no previous records and no motive for the crime. They were kept in jail for five months in Northampton, but not granted defense attorneys until forty-eight hours before their trial at which, based on very flimsy evidence, they were convicted within minutes. Even at the time, there were charges of a great miscarriage of justice due to ethnic and religious bigotry. Nonetheless, they were publicly hanged, and 15,000 people came to witness their execution, Reverend King among them. The first clause of 1 John, 3:15 reads as follows: “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.” (It is likely that King’s May 5th entry also refers to Daley and Halligan.) Nearly two centuries later, in 1984, the two “convicts” were exonerated by Massachusetts Governor Dukakis.

Reverend King’s diary continues with:

1806: June 16: a remarkable eclipse of the sun takes place, being totally visible. Am prevented from making the accurate observations that I intended being called away at the time of the greatest obscurity, however a number of stars appear and the darkness is as great as an [sic] ½ hour after sunset.

1812: May 31: apple tree blooms begin to appear. (While this entry seems unremarkable, one historian has written that “farm journals frequently reported the arrival of apple blossoms [because this was] one of the period’s signals for the start of planting.”187)
When Reverend King died suddenly of a fever in the fall of 1812, it was a “sad shock” to his congregation. He had been well-liked and

*esteemed for his calm pursuit [sic] of duty, his patience under injuries, and success in peace-making. His influence upon the people was that of a father, and his visits which were frequent were eminently pastoral and edifying.*

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188 WBA Minutes 1857, 14.
OTHER NOTEWORTHY WENDELL BAPTISTS

REVERENDS OTIS and EZRA FISHER

Otis and Ezra Fisher were the sons of Aaron Fisher, one of the founding fathers of the Wendell Baptist Church [see his story under “Revolutionary War”]. Otis, born in 1808 and baptized in 1825, was educated at Amherst College and went to Illinois. His older brother Ezra, born in 1800, taught school at eighteen, but was unable to finish his preparatory courses for college until he was twenty-two due to insufficient funds and a severe illness. In 1822, Ezra was baptized and admitted to Amherst College, but again poverty and sickness stalled his graduation until 1829. A year later, he married his childhood friend and fiancée of two years, Lucy Taft, a twin daughter of Timothy and Abigail Taft of Wendell. He then went to Newton Theological Seminary. Later, he and Lucy were sent out as missionaries to Vermont, Indiana, Iowa, and Oregon, where Ezra died in 1874.

THOMAS E. SAWIN

Sawin’s story is given at the beginning of this book. Although he was not a member of the clergy, he is included here because his contribution to the Wendell Baptist Church was extraordinary. The anonymous man who penned the 1857 minutes of the Wendell Baptist Association’s annual meeting paid him the following debt of gratitude:

In the early part of 1830, two young men, while out of town by reflection on the true purposes of life, were led to Christ. One of them was the present clerk of this church, Thomas E. Sawin, on whom the writer of this letter has been chiefly dependent for the facts and dates here embodied, and to whose extensive labors, in the collecting and preserving [of] historical facts, the town of Wendell, as well as the Baptist churches of both Shutesbury and Wendell, are deeply indebted. The other was the second son of the pastor: [Josiah Goddard].189

189 WBA Minutes 1857, 15.
Josiah Goddard (b. 1813), son of Reverend David Goddard, was educated in Wendell and at Brown University and Newton Theological Seminary. He married Eliza Ann Abbott in 1838, and they went as missionaries to Siam (Thailand) and Ningpo, China, where their four children were born. Josiah became fluent in two Chinese dialects. He has been described as

short and thin, of pale complexion, with features and movements marked by rectangles, rather than curved lines. When seated in a common chair, he needed a footstool; but in intellect he was a tall man...he brought to his work a large share of common sense and sound judgment, and a warm heart and high-toned Christian principle. He saw clearly, formed his conclusions maturely, and then adhered to them tenaciously. As a preacher, he was methodical, simple and instructive. As a translator, he was laborious, prayerful and successful. He was a faithful missionary, a lovely Christian, a pleasant companion, a devoted husband and a fond and faithful father.190

In 1848 in Bangkok, Josiah suffered a severe attack of bleeding in his lungs, but recovered enough to work for six more years before dying of tuberculosis on September 4, 1854, at age forty-one. His burial place is unknown.

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Reverend David Goddard II (b. 1812) was educated — like his brother Josiah — at Brown University, but he left before graduating. Nonetheless, he was appointed pastor of Leominster Baptist Church. Sawin says that while serving there, Reverend Goddard “became infected with the new views of Miller...and he lost his place.” He later went to Athol, where he was “for a time afterwards very effective in proclaiming his views.” He died in Athol of consumption in 1844. His wife, Charlotte Davenport, lived until 1867.

**MILLERISM**

A list of people who were excommunicated from the Wendell Baptist Church in the mid-nineteenth century is found in Sawin’s notes. Reasons given for their excommunication include drunkenness, heresy, carnal connections, Methodism, and “Millerism.”

William Miller, a Baptist lay preacher from upstate New York, began predicting the second coming of Jesus Christ in 1833, the year of many religious revivals in New England. By Miller’s calculations, the event was to transpire between March 1843 and March 1844. When that failed to happen, the date was changed to April 18, 1844, but when that day, too, came and went uneventfully, the date was changed once again, this time to October 22, 1844. Eventually, Millerites and their beliefs faded into obscurity.

**REVEREND JOHN COMINS BALL**

John C. Ball was born in February 1819 to Jesse Ball and Lydia Comins, daughter of Reuben Comins of Leverett. At twenty-one, he married eighteen-year-old Lucy Pratt Gardner of Leverett, and they lived at the far end of Old Egypt Road in Wendell on a property that was part of his mother’s inheritance from her father. Sawin described John Ball as “feeble, but amiable; a studious man” who preached at the Leverett Baptist Church. Philosophically, Reverend Ball adhered to the fundamentalist precepts of the Freewill Baptists. The only other facts known about this man and his family come from the sad record of their early deaths:
1. Truman John Ball, born in 1842, married in 1865, and died less than a year later; death records say he was “heart-seized.”

2. Daniel Edwin Ball, born in 1844, enlisted as a Private in the 27th Infantry, and fought in the Civil War; he was captured at Drury’s Bluff and died a POW at Charleston, South Carolina, age twenty.

3. Lydia Alvira Ball, born in 1847 and died fifteen months later “of a fall.”

4. Reuben Meritt Ball, born in 1853 and died seventeen months later; cause was given as “of the lungs.”

5. Augustus Mason Ball, a twin, born in 1856, married Helen Adelaide Gardner in 1877. He died in Montague in 1925.

6. Augusta Mary Ball, the other twin, born in 1856, married Charles Flagg in 1890 and Fred Shantley in 1900. The twins were the only children of John and Lucy who lived to maturity.

7. Samuel H. Ball, brother of the Reverend John Ball, born in 1825, died in Wendell in 1848, at the age of twenty-three, by “the fall of a coal cabin.”

8. Reverend John C. Ball died in 1872, age fifty-three. According to his obituary, he was sitting with his sick daughter (Augusta) one night when he fell asleep and knocked a kerosene lamp into his lap. He “was so badly burned before assistance could be procured that he died from its effects four days later.”

Reverend Ball is buried in the now nearly forgotten little Gardner Cemetery off of Skerry Road in Leverett.

Today, what was once Reverend Ball’s property lies on an unusually flat piece of ground at the end of the now discontinued and privately owned Old Egypt Road. The cellar hole, with steps leading down into it, is well-preserved, but because it lies at the end of a string of long ago abandoned houses, a haunting absence permeates the place.

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191 Greenfield Gazette and Courier, February 24, 1872, Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield, Massachusetts.
Mary Needham Phelps’s story begins with her mother, Eliza Howe, daughter of John and Sophia Howe (see “Howe” family), and her father, Joseph Needham, son of Ruth Jackman and Joshua Needham, a carpenter, who had come from the Lunenburg area to Wendell in the 1790s and built a home on New Salem Road. Mary’s father was one of the eleven Wendell men sent to help defend Boston in 1814. Sawin described him as “an efficient farmer,” but added – as he was prone to – that he “drinks hard.” Both Mary’s parents were born in Wendell, and their town became their children’s town. They raised their family on what is now Montague Road just across from the entrance to West Street. (A careful look through the trees standing there today reveals one remaining exterior wall, made of stone, with a cut-out for a window – all that’s left of the home that once stood there. The house must have been a grand one because, according to oral history, the house across the street was once its carriage house. Whether the grand house dates to Joseph Needham’s time – or later – is not known. See “The Needham House” below.) In their old age, Joseph and Eliza moved to Enfield, where they lived next door to their daughter Esther.

Mary Needham (b. 1822) was the first of Joseph and Eliza’s children. Unlike most women of her time, Mary postponed marriage until she reached the age of twenty-seven in 1849. Her husband was William Harrison Phelps, a man who had been born in Belchertown, but established himself in Wendell as a successful lumber dealer. In 1858 he owned 427 acres, which included his forty-six-acre homestead (at the western corner of Dirth and Montague Roads) not far from his in-laws’ home and his sawmill on Osgood Brook where it crosses New Salem Road. William’s assets at that time comprised one horse, four oxen, one cow, one swine, and bank stock worth $2,279. William and Mary were

192 Everts, History of the Connecticut Valley, 783.
193 1860 Valuation List, Wendell Town Vault.
described as “socially and financially affluent” – he, a lumber baron, and she, an historian and genealogist. Sawin adds to that his own image of William Phelps: “a saw miller and farmer, Congregationalist, rich and active, a drinker and a Democrat.”

Mary and William Phelps had four children, all born in Wendell: Myra, Willie, Moses, and George. George died when he was two years old in 1865, and soon after that Mary and William and their three remaining children moved to Northfield, where William remained active and prosperous in the lumber business. Three years before his death, William bequeathed 144 acres of forest to the town of Wendell with the proviso that the proceeds from timber harvested on those acres go “toward the support of Common Schools” in Wendell “forever.” (In 2015, for the first time in many decades, the town is once again complying with the conditions of Mr. Phelps’s gift.) When he died at the age of seventy-eight in 1891, Mary went to live with her daughter Myra and Myra’s husband, Herman Wells, a Northfield farmer-turned-real-estate-agent, in Foxboro, Massachusetts. In 1910, Mary and Myra, both widowed, were living with one servant on their “own income” – a large one, no doubt. Mary died in 1916 at age ninety-four, and Myra died at ninety-two in 1942. They are both buried in Northfield alongside William Harrison Phelps.

A “social library” was established in Wendell in 1824. Lewis Stone was its first librarian, and the books available for circulation were provided by families in town. Isaiah C. Soule, the gravestone cutter, and a man named Daniel Rogers are remembered for their frequent contributions and withdrawals. The library paved the way for a “lyceum” where young and old met to discuss the questions of the day. It wasn’t until the spring of 1894, when Wendell voted to accept the terms of the Library Act of 1890, that books were sent by the Free Public Library Commission of Massachusetts to form the beginnings of the Wendell Free Library to which Mary Phelps then made a liberal gift.

When Wendell sent out an appeal to former residents of the town in 1919–1921 for funds to move the library out of its cramped quarters in the Town Hall into a building of its own, members

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of Mary Needham Phelps’s family who responded generously included her daughter Myra, Mary’s two sons Moses and William, and the son of Mary’s sister-in-law’s sister, Dwight Sweetser.

THE NEEDHAM HOUSE

On Sawin’s maps and on the 1858 Walling map, the house on Montague Road across from the entrance to West Street was occupied by Joseph and Eliza Needham, parents of Mary Needham Phelps. On the 1871 Beers map, however, the occupant of that house was “D. J. M. A. Jewett.” This was David Jewett, a fascinating man. Born in Ipswich, Massachusetts, in 1834, he was educated in Europe in both engineering and law. He was with the 78th Highlanders in the Crimean War in 1854 and then returned to the US to fight for the Union, rising to the rank of captain, in the Civil War. He married Ruth Abigail Fielding (her adopted name) in Marblehead around 1860 and, in 1866, went to the New Mexico Territory in command of US troops. David, Ruth, their three children, and Ruth’s mother came to Wendell at the end of that decade— for reasons that will probably never be known—but did not stay long. In September 1871, they relocated to Louisiana where for the next decade David held various political positions and became a trusted advisor to that state’s Republican Party. In 1880, the Jewett family (or maybe only David) moved to White Oaks, New Mexico. There, David conducted business as a civil engineer and as a lawyer; he also made a name for himself as a mining expert and was recognized for his efforts to suppress the outlaws known as “Rustlers.” In 1909, he died in Capitan, New Mexico. Several different obituaries describe Mr. Jewett as a man of intellectual force and scholarly attainments as well as a famous duelist in Europe and a fighter of Indians in New Mexico. One writer, however, presented a darker side of Jewett’s life, saying “Strong drink...was his bane and incapacitated him, like so many others, in his later days, from a useful career.” (Source: www.findagrave.com, Find A Grave Memorial #82860379, posted 1-02-2012.)

Genealogical Notes:

Mary Needham Phelps’s brother Augustus went to Wisconsin in his early twenties and became a carpenter/contractor. He served in the Civil War and later owned the Needham Lumber Company in Watertown, Wisconsin.

Mary’s brother Joshua died at the age of twenty-four.

Mary’s brother Emery married Mary Bent Armstrong, daughter of Deacon Martin Armstrong and Mary Mason Bent, the Needham family’s nearest neighbors. They moved to Amherst, where Emery worked as a farmer.
Mary’s sister Ellen married Charles Howard, a mechanic in Orange.

Mary’s sister Esther married Aretas Janes Cadwell, a lumber manufacturer; they lived in Enfield.

Mary’s son, Moses Augustus Phelps, followed in his father’s footsteps. He moved to Spokane, Washington, where he became a very successful businessman, real estate investor, lumberman, and banker. He married Netta Wells Sheldon, a well-known Spokane socialite and civic benefactress who was highly regarded for her work as a historical book author, a State Regent for the D.A.R., and a philanthropist during her “long and busy life spent in service to others.” The Moses and Netta Phelps house in Spokane is on the National Register of Historic Places.

All of the above relatives – and more – are remembered in a quilt cover made by Emery Needham’s niece, Gertrude Dudley, in the early 1900s. For more about this, see the end of the “Captain Henry Sweetser” account.

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195 Ibid.
STONE FAMILIES

In Wendell, the surname “Stone” was almost as common as “Smith” is in other places – and, strangely, “Smith” was non-existent in Wendell. There are twenty-two “Stones” in Center Cemetery, and it appears they fall into three major family groupings.

JOHN, ABRAHAM I, ABRAHAM II & MOSES STONE

One of the Stone clans had as its patriarch, or what might be called “settler ancestor,” Jonathan ("John") Stone, born in Groton in 1723. In the mid-1770s, he came to Wendell with his son Abraham I (b. 1748, Groton), who may have already been married to Mary Osgood (b. 1750), daughter of Aaron Osgood's brother Moses. John Stone was in his fifties when he arrived in Wendell, and he seems to have stayed out of any involvement in the goings-on of the town because the only mention of him in any of the town records is his death in 1819 at the age of ninety-six.

John’s son Abraham I and his wife, Mary, had three children: Abraham II in 1774, Moses in 1777, and Mary in 1780. Abraham I served the town as constable and collector of taxes in 1784, and he is on the 1790 census. Sawin says that Abraham I located his first house, in 1776, on the west side of New Salem Road at the foot of Orcutt Hill. About a decade later, he abandoned that house in favor of a second one he built directly across the street. He died in Wendell in 1838.

His son Abraham II put up a house on Wickett Pond Road, next door to Samuel Brewer’s place, and married Nathan Brewer’s daughter Sarah with whom he had four children. But, as noted earlier, he “ran off and left his family.” His brother Moses then took in Abraham’s son, Israel, and Samuel Brewer, “being the brother-in-law,” took in two of the other children: Sally and Eunice. The fourth child, Salmon, presumably stayed with his mother. The only clue regarding Abraham II’s fate surfaced in an
Osgood genealogy: next to Abraham II’s name are the two words “of Vermont.”

Abraham II’s brother, Moses, married Martha “Patty” Whitaker in 1804, was a “collector” for the Baptist church in 1821, and served the town as selectman in 1842. In either 1818 or 1828 (Sawin gives both dates), Moses built a Cape-style house on New Salem Road (#475) across from the entrance to Jennison Road. (That house is now lived in by a couple named, coincidentally, Stone – of no relation, however, to Moses.) Judging by the stone work inside the house, especially around the living room fireplace, Moses was an accomplished stone mason. Oral history maintains that neither Moses nor Patty wanted to be buried in Center Cemetery, so Moses built a stone tomb for their eternal resting place across the street from the house. Sawin dates the tomb – which, he says, was put up on the site of an old school – to 1846, six years before Patty’s death of “numb palsy” and twenty before Moses’. Both were buried in the tomb, but at some later date their remains were removed and reinterred in Center Cemetery. (Note: According to the current owner, a “secret” room within the house connects to the tomb or crypt by a tunnel, and there has been some studied speculation that the crypt was used as part of the Underground Railroad.) Moses and Patty’s daughter, Martha (b. 1808), married Samuel Butler (Sawin refers to this Mr. Butler as “Calvin,” but the man’s true name was Samuel;
Calvin was his father’s name). At Moses’ death in 1866, ownership of the house transferred to Samuel Butler. When Butler was sixty-nine in 1880, he committed “suicide by hanging” and was buried in New Salem Cemetery. Martha lived on in the house as a widow until her death the day after Christmas, 1890. She is buried in the New Salem Cemetery next to her son, who died at the age of nine months in 1844.

More information from Sawin’s Map IX: Slightly east of Moses Stone’s property and across from the entrance to Gate Lane was a house built early on by Jonathan Orcutt, father of blacksmith Samuel Orcutt. In 1827, Sawin says, “Townsend Castle” built the house that stands there today. Sawin may have erred on the spelling of Townsend’s last name. It makes much more sense that this was Townsend Caswell (1798–1872) whose name appears in many old Wendell records and whose wife, Cynthia Whitaker, was Moses Stone’s wife’s sister. (Author’s note: Of no concern to anybody but me, Townsend Caswell and I share an immigrant ancestor, Thomas Caswell, who went from England to Taunton, Massachusetts.)

BROTHERS ELIJAH, CLARK and LEVI STONE

A second family of Stones derived from Levi and Mary Stone of Sutton, Massachusetts. They themselves did not come to Wendell, but their sons Clark (1757–1825), Elijah (1759–1816), and Levi (1767–1855) did. Levi, the youngest brother, seems to have been the first, arriving soon after his 1796 marriage to Betsy Kidder. (She was the sister of both Amy (aka Ann) Kidder who married Silas Wilder II, and Polly Kidder who married Dr. Elihu Ewers.) Clark was next, settling before the 1798 birth of his third child, and Elijah lived in town briefly in the early 1800s, according to Sawin, before moving on to Vermont. Between the three men, they had nineteen children, many of whom had children of their own in Wendell.

Levi Stone and Betsy Kidder spent most of their lives in Wendell, raising children Lewis, Levi, and Elizabeth. Levi was town treasurer from 1798 to 1822, with the exception of only one year. He made his living primarily as a tradesman: he was a cabinet maker with several sidelines, including clock repair, coffin construction, carpentry, house and decorative painting, and window installation and repair. His wife contributed to the family business with tailoring work, and their son Lewis partnered in business with them for a time. Glued to the first page of an account book belonging to Levi and Lewis Stone for the years 1815 to 1839, there is the following handwritten advertisement:

CABINET WORK FOR SALE – The subscriber would informe his customers and the public that he has on hand a good apartment of cabinet work for sale as cheep as can be purchased in the vicinity, viz. bureaus, French bedsteds, Tables of the best western chary [and] bird's eye, do [ditto] work stand, wash stands, dressing tables, etc, all which he will sell as cheepe as can be purchased in this vicinity for cash...Wendell, January 16, 1839, Levi Stone.

Levi was seventy-two years old that year, and it may be that he was liquidating his inventory before retiring. As it turned out, he lived on for another sixteen years. Lewis was mentioned in the section on Mary Needham Phelps as having been Wendell’s first librarian. (The Stones’ account books give much insight into the personal and occupational aspects of Wendell residents’ lives in the first half of the nineteenth century. See Appendix III.)

Levi’s brother Elijah and his wife, Sarah Bartlett, were in Wendell from 1803 to 1810, Sawin says, living in Oliver Wetherbee’s old house. After that, they went to Vermont.

Clark Stone, the first-born of the three brothers, lost his first wife, Hannah, in Sutton soon after they were married. He then fought in the Revolutionary War and moved to Stratton, Vermont, where he married Chloe Kelly, his second wife, in 1791. Before the decade was out, they were living in Wendell. Clark owned a mill on the Millers River (future site of the J. E. Stone Piano Case Factory) and a store on the east side of the Common (later owned

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198 Stone, Account Book, 1815–1839. I have inserted commas in the advertisement for easier reading. The spelling is Levi’s.
and operated by Otis Chittendon). Sawin's notes show that Clark moved around the Common, in musical-chairs fashion, living in a variety of different houses. He was selectman in 1813. Clark and Chloe had six girls and two boys.

Clark and Chloe Stone's first son, Eliab (b.1792), characterized by Sawin as a "spendthrift" and "droll and drinky, but busy in labor," married Dolly Armstrong (1793–1872), niece of Deacon Martin Armstrong. Eliab and Dolly, also residents of Wetherbee's house, named their son after Eliab's father, making this boy a second "Clark Stone" (1821–1894). When he grew up, he was active in Wendell affairs for a while, serving as selectman, assessor, and overseer of the poor.

After Eliab, Clark and Chloe had four girls and then one child who died young. The couple's seventh child, Clark Lysander Stone (b.1817), became the third "Clark Stone" in Wendell at that time. He was born when his father was sixty years old. Clark Lysander attended high school at Fellenberg Academy in Greenfield, and in 1836 he married his cousin Amy Stone. (Amy was the daughter of Polly Porter and Sardis Stone, son of Elijah and Sarah Stone.) When Amy died in 1858, Clark married Cordelia Williams, but he died one year later.

Clark and Chloe's granddaughter Dolly (1819–1860), daughter of their son Eliab, was at the center of a scandal reported in the May 12, 1854, edition of the American Republic of Greenfield:

Captain George A. Green of Wendell was brought to trial for the crime of bastardy [sic] with a single woman of Wendell. The case was continued to Friday the 31st, Green giving $50 bonds for his appearance at that time. He has since left for parts unknown with his wife and family and handiman [sic]. Captain Green has been a somewhat conspicuous man in Wendell, representing the Democrats of that town in the Legislature and elected into other town offices. He has been a member of the Orthodox [Congregational] church for many years. His paramour was Miss Dolly Stone, also a member of the church and stood in good repute. She kept her brother's house. The child was born in the night before the Fast Day, before
rumor had spoiled her good name. The bail was purposefully low – to let the villain escape.

A search through available records fleshes out the story a bit more. Around 1850, George A. Green, a “house joiner” or finish carpenter, lived with his wife, Olive, and their six children, ranging in age from one month to fifteen years, in the small settlement by the “Smallpox Cemetery.” George had served the town as selectman, the Congregational church as assessor, and the Commonwealth as representative. Sawin judged him “a libertine” and states that he “ran off for bastardy, 1851.” Massachusetts census records show that in 1860, George A. Green was living in Ware, Massachusetts, with a new wife, Emmeline, and Ada, his youngest daughter by Olive. His fifteen-year old son had been farmed out to a barber and his family. As for what became of Olive and the other children, there are no clues. In February 1864, George enlisted in Company I of the Massachusetts Infantry Regiment and served in the Civil War for fourteen months. His enlistment papers describe him as being five feet, ten inches tall, with blue eyes, brown hair, and a florid complexion. George died in 1871 at age fifty-two in Ware. Dolly Stone, George’s “paramour,” was married in 1856 to an Abraham Morrison, but died five years after her wedding. Both the identity and the fate of Dolly’s illegitimate child are unknown.

**LUTHER STONE (1799–1888)**

Sawmill Owner

Unlike the above-mentioned Stone families who came from Groton and Sutton, the first Luther Stone – uncle of the subject of this sketch – migrated from Framingham, Massachusetts. He was born there in 1776 and settled in Wendell sometime before the 1790 census, having purchased land at the fork of Mormon Hollow and Farley Roads. In 1803, he married Nelly Cutting of Framingham. Luther’s neighbor, Abel Death (at #240 Farley Road), married Nelly’s sister Nancy, and the two couples must have been good friends because Abel Death named his last child Luther Stone Death. In 1810, Luther increased the size of his
property by buying 145 acres on the north side of Farley Road, opposite his prior purchase. That, however, was his last real estate investment. In 1814, Luther was dead at age thirty-eight. His widow, Nelly, stayed on in Wendell where, about twelve years later, she was joined by her late husband’s nephew and namesake, Luther Stone, son of her husband’s brother, Israel.

This second Luther Stone married Lucy How in their hometown of East Sudbury in 1825 and then moved to Wendell where their first child – a third Luther Stone – was born, but he died as a baby in 1827. In 1828, their daughter Lucy was born and she was followed, in 1835, by another daughter, Ellen Lydia. At some point, a third daughter, Charlotte, older than the other two girls, was adopted by Luther and Lucy. Luther was an “upright and active man,” in Sawin’s words, and he was said to have been extremely tall, about six feet, ten inches – as stated earlier in the section on Mormonism. He operated (and maybe built) the sawmill on his uncle’s property on Wickett Pond Brook, and he did well for himself in the lumber business. He was also civic minded, being at one time a state representative. He was, however, the man thought to have placed a flat stone over the chimney in the house where Mormons were meeting. Luther and his family, including his aunt Nelly, appear on the Wendell census in 1840, 1850, and 1860, and Sawin’s Map XIV pinpoints the location of Luther Stone’s house as being just north of Farley Road’s fork with Mormon Hollow Road (where the power lines are now). “L. Stone’s Sawmill” is printed on the 1858 Walling map, yet Sawin’s notes say that the mill was consumed by fire “in the daytime on March 27, 1854.” Sawin also says that there was a “disused gristmill” at this site. In 1870, Luther and Lucy were living in Montague, and the 1871 map of Wendell shows only a schoolhouse (the Mormon Hollow School) near the site of Luther’s destroyed mill. By 1880, Luther was widowed and back on Farley Road, living with his daughter Ellen and her husband, Andrew Baker, one of Luther Baker’s few surviving sons. [See “Luther Baker.”] Luther Stone died in Wendell when he was eighty-nine and is buried next to his wife and baby son in Center Cemetery.

199 Leading Citizens, Franklin Co., 1895, 256.
Andrew Baker’s house, sitting on the bulk of Luther I’s 1810 purchase, was located a few hundred yards east of Luther II’s ruined sawmill. He put the property up for sale around 1890, and his description of his real estate is worth reading for the image it gives of that area of Farley Road at that time:

Farm of 100 acres: mowing, 15; pasture, 40; woodland, 45; suitable for cultivation, 25. Land slopes to the south. Grass can be cut with a machine. Sugarbush, 100 trees. House, 28’ x 32’; shed, 12’ x 24’; 7 rooms, fair repair. Barn, 30’ x 32’, in fair repair, with cellar. Wood fence suitable to keep stock. Water from well. 50 apple trees. There are 200 or 300 cords of wood on the place and timber sufficient to repair buildings. RR station, Wendell, 3 miles; post-office, Wendell, 1 ½ miles. Price $650; cash at sale, $200; interest on balance, 6%.200

In 2013, the Wendell Historical Society received from Bertha Diemand Petruski a faded photograph of a coke kiln built at an unknown date at the site of Luther Stone’s sawmill. The kiln, used for charcoal production, survived the 1938 hurricane and was still standing in the late 1960s. At that time, according to Bertha, local children often played there, referring to the area as “Andy Baker’s land,” because it was owned by Andrew Baker’s grandson, Andrew J. Baker (1909-1972). Today, the former kiln is nothing more than a large, nearly flat circle of bricks on a rise above the brook.

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Samuel Bent, the man who married Reverend Kilburn's daughter, went west, and converted to Mormonism, sold a property he owned on Locke's Village Road to Samuel Burgess on November 16, 1819. Born in Barre around 1795, Burgess would have been in his mid-twenties at that time. He does not appear on the 1820 Wendell census, but on the last page of the 1830 Wendell census, at the end of the long list of men living in town that year, the name “Samuel Burgess” was written and then crossed out – and no record was made of women and children who may have been living with him. That his name was last on the list, separated by a few spaces from all those above his, suggests that there was something “different” about him. Perhaps the problem was that the page on which the census-taker wrote – and then crossed out – his name was reserved for “Free White Persons;” but if so, then why wasn’t Burgess’s name written on the page intended to record “Free Colored Persons”? In any event, it is fairly certain that Burgess was counted as one of the approximately 875 people living in town that year.

A book written about the black population in the Amherst area in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries includes Samuel Burgess as well as his marriage to “Elizabeth” in 1843. Samuel was a resident of Wendell at that time, but this marriage is not found in Wendell’s Vital Records. Elizabeth, with no known surname, was the widow of a Steven Thompson of Amherst and the daughter of an unidentified Whately man. The marriage may have taken place in Amherst. On the 1850 Wendell census, Samuel, fifty-four, and Elizabeth, forty-four, were living with her sixteen-year old daughter, Elizabeth Thompson; they were all listed as “black.” (Samuel’s house stood approximately where #119 Locke’s Village Road is today.) In 1858, “S. Burgess” appears on the 1858 Walling map, and in 1860, still at the same address, Samuel gave his oc-

cupation as “farmer.” Sawin’s mid-century remarks misidentify Samuel as “Stephen” Burgess, living with his wife and “boy,” both errors suggesting that Sawin did not personally know the people he described as “the only colored family in town.” Sawin gave Samuel Burgess’s religion as Congregationalist and his occupation as “farmer,” and he made a note that he was “of good name.” In 1870, Samuel’s wife, Elizabeth, died of consumption and he went to Amherst to live with relatives of her first husband, a Thompson family, all of whom were described by the census-taker as “mulattos.”

Note: The only other mention I found in Wendell records regarding people of African-American heritage is a terse notation in Reverend Kilburn’s personal journal in 1784: “Liberty, a Negro child under the care of Reverend Samuel Kendall [first minister of New Salem], baptized at his office.”

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Lucius Cooke, the son of James Cooke and Martha "Patty" Moody, was born in 1814 in Amherst. Of his early life, nothing is known, but on November 30, 1837, in Boston, he married Fidelia F. Hayward, daughter of Randall and Sarah Hayward of Plainfield, Massachusetts. Lucius and Fidelia soon moved to Wendell, where Ivory Holland Howe (nephew of Ephraim and Abel Howe) built a house for them at the north end of Center Cemetery on what had been the site of George Gary’s hat manufacturing shop. (Later, the house was owned by the Goldthwaite family and then demolished. 203 Cooke’s lot was, in modern times, one north of Rupert Goddard’s house which was torn down in the late 1990s.) In 1840, Cooke began practicing as a physician in Wendell, where his services must have been doubly valued for he was also a skilled surgeon. Sawin adds that as well as being a popular physician, Cooke was “an expert Justice of the Peace.” While Sawin considered Cooke an “expert” at this, another source described him as “something of a pettifogger in the law.” 204

In fact, there were many sides to the man. In the early 1840s, he became Wendell’s first postmaster, 205 a job he held for five or six years. A letter addressed by “L. Cooke, P.M. [Post Master]” to the “Publisher of the Massachusetts Whig” was found for sale at an online auction house in 2014; it is dated only “August 28” and was sent from Wendell for “free” – one of the perks, presumably, of being postmaster. For this job, Cooke was paid $30 per year.

203 Greenfield Gazette and Courier, October 18, 1902, Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield, Massachusetts.

204 Everts, History of the Connecticut Valley, 576.

205 The source of this information was a USPS website that is no longer available; however, an 1847 almanac shows Cooke as postmaster in Wendell that year: James Loring, Massachusetts Register or Record Book of Valuable Information for the Year 1847, (Boston: James Loring), 107, http://www.archives.lib.state.ma.us.
Cooke was also a dogged farmer. An 1852 letter from Dr. Cooke to *The New England Farmer* \(^{206}\) regarding his \(\frac{3}{4}\)-acre property “on Wendell Hill” boasts, justifiably, of its high yield of 651 bushels (sixteen tons) of carrots that year. The letter is preceded by a statement from the editor describing Wendell as “not one of our best towns for land, by any means; on the contrary, we regard it as a rough, hilly town with a good deal of poor land.” A part of Cooke’s letter is copied here:

> The land on which these carrots were raised had been mowed for 8 years prior to 1850 when it was planted with potatoes nearly all of which were destroyed by the disease.

> In 1851 the land was planted to corn which was much damaged by worms and afterwards set out to rutabagas which grew well and yielded a fine crop – but having no animals that would eat them except horses, they were kept through the winter in a cellar and then thrown out for manure – the entire crops on the land not paying the expense of cultivation by one-half...

> On or about the 20\(^{th}\) of May 1852 the land was sowed in drills 18” apart to carrots…the land being first prepared by plowing with a common plow then raked and leveled – about 30 loads of horse manure being spread on the land before plowing. The labor of preparing the land, growing the seeds, cultivating and harvesting the crop, I contracted for at the commencement, for the sum of seventy-five dollars which seemed to me and others as an extravagant price, but as some stones were to be removed in the job, I consoled myself with the belief that I might stand it “just this once.” \(^{207}\)

The letter goes on to explain that after all associated costs, including paying himself $25 for his “own care and skill,” his efforts paid off with a bonanza yield of carrots for which he was able to net $100. It seems logical that Dr. Cooke’s earlier failures with potatoes and corn matched those of his neighbors and other townsfolk, giving us a pretty good idea of the agricultural


\(^{207}\) Ibid.
challenges they faced. Cooke’s determination and success in finding a commercially viable crop – what might be called “persistence farming” – cannot have gone unnoticed by all the other farmers in Wendell, and yet the winds of change were already blowing through the town: people were packing up and leaving for brighter prospects elsewhere. The town’s population dropped by nineteen percent between 1850 and 1854, and both Sawin and the 1860 census taker took note of many vacant houses as they walked through town.

In another matter, Lucius Cooke came up against the wrath of Samuel French, a blacksmith who lived at #11 Montague Road and had his shop directly across the street. French was described by Sawin as an “iron-hearted and iron-fisted busy-body,” as seen earlier, and was “a victim to strong drink.” French publicly blamed Cooke for the death of his wife, and Dr. Cooke sued French for having uttered the following slander: “Dr. Cooke is a d----d scoundrel and is round killing folks, and has killed my wife and one other of my family; my wife would have been alive now but for Dr. Cooke.”[208]

A newspaper clipping about this incident is tucked into one of Sawin’s notebooks. It reads:

Lucius Cooke v. Samuel French – This was an action for slander, and the trial occupied about two days. The writ alleged that the defendant had at various times charged the plaintiff, who is a physician, with having occasioned the death of his, French’s, wife by carelessness or malpractice in his profession. It also alleged that French had accused the plaintiff of murder and manslaughter. The defendant... denied that he had ever accused the plaintiff of any crime and, for the rest, contended that he was in favor of the botanic system of medicine; and that what he said of Dr. Cooke, he said of him only as an allopathist, or apothecary doctor, applying it equally to all physicians of that school. But the jury did not believe him. Verdict for the plaintiff. Damages: $150.83.[209]

208 Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, Volume 150, No. 6, (1851), 128, no longer available online.
209 The clipping neither names nor dates the newspaper.
History has even provided a physical description of Cooke who is “remembered as a stoutly built, corpulent man,” which may explain his death at age forty-four in 1858 in Erving, where he and Fidelia had moved two years previously.

Prior to Dr. Cooke’s death, Fidelia had proved herself a prolific writer of poetry and fiction. Josiah Holland, historian and in-house literary editor of the Springfield Republican, which published much of her work, described her as “the most gifted and graceful poetess living in western Massachusetts” and reported that her many contributions to his paper were “copied by the press throughout the Union.” After being widowed, she replaced Holland at the Springfield Republican, and during the Civil War years she promoted a relationship between New England women’s poetry and the war news that did much to cheer the paper’s readers. Fidelia died in 1897 at age eighty-one.

Historian Everts claims that Lucius and Fidelia left no children, yet both the 1850 and 1855 Wendell censuses show a young boy, “Edward P. Cooke,” living with them. This was their adopted son, Edward Payson Rust, who had been born to an Amherst couple on March 3, 1845. In 1865, he was living with a farming family in Worthington; in 1880, he was in Brattleboro, Vermont, married to a woman named Fanny and working at an organ factory, probably Estey’s; in 1900, they were in Mansfield, Massachusetts, where he worked as a railroad flagman; and finally, in 1913, he was back where he had been born, in Amherst, occupied as a woodcarver.

* * *

210 Ibid.
211 Holland, History of Western Massachusetts, 458.
213 Thanks go to Cathy Stanton, Wendell resident and anthropology professor, for all the information she uncovered regarding Edward Cooke as well as her thoughts on the implications of Lucius Cooke’s carrot experiment.
Holland provides a list of names of physicians in Wendell prior to Cooke’s arrival in 1840. It is printed below with the addition, where possible, of supplemental biographical information:

- J. Fiske. As seen in the section on the Fiske family, this appears to have been Dr. Jonathan Fiske, who came to Wendell in the 1770s.

- Daniel Porter. Son of Benjamin Porter and Marcy Dorman. He was born in 1757 in Braintree, Massachusetts. In Wendell in 1782, he married Rachel Wetherbee, daughter of Oliver Wetherbee. Besides being a physician, Porter served the town as town clerk for thirty-five years from 1788 to 1823. Sawin located Dr. Porter’s residence at what is now #1 Bullard Pasture Road, and today Porter’s cellar hole is still there, closer to the street than the present house. Daniel and Rachel eventually left Wendell for Whitestown, New York where Daniel died in 1832.

- Benjamin Ball. Born in 1780 in Leverett, he was the son of Benjamin Ball and Jerusha Woodbury. In 1805, he married Charlotte Ewers, daughter of Henry and Tryphena Ewers in Wendell (possibly related to the Dr. E. Ewers listed below). Sawin’s Map XIII shows the location of Dr. Ball’s home at what is now #68 Wendell Depot Road. Benjamin and Charlotte had five children. The 1816 spotted fever (typhus) epidemic in Wendell killed Dr. Ball, and two of his sons became deaf and mute as a result of it. One boy, Danforth Ewers Ball, was sent to the American Asylum for the Deaf in Hartford at age fifteen and grew up to teach at a Columbus, Ohio, institution for the deaf.

• Asa Howe. A son of Abel Howe and Hannah Needham, he was born in Wendell in 1784. He married Relief Woodard, had seven children, and died in New Salem in 1865.

• E. Ewers. This was Dr. Elihu Ewers who married Polly Kidder in 1798. (Silas Wilder II and Levi Stone were her brothers-in-law.) Dr. Ewers owned property at the center of town and at Erving’s Gore, but emigrated to Manlius, New York, where he died in 1849.

• Morton Williams. There is no record of “Morton” Williams, but a “Doctor David Williams of Wendell” married Elizabeth Barber of Ashfield in 1827. He died in Wendell five years later.

• William S. Barrett. No “William” Barrett was found, but a “Doctor Solomon Barrett of Wendell” married Lucinda Stone, daughter of Clark Stone I, in 1833. They went to Forestville, New York, where Lucinda died in 1843.

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William Stebbins, born in Utica, New York, in 1803, was in his mid-twenties and working at the Oxford Woolen Mill in Oxford, Massachusetts, when he met and married Sabrina Gibbs of the now extinct town of Dana. Five children later, in the 1840s, William and Sabrina moved to Wendell, where they had two more children and bought a house on forty-two acres (at #102 West Street), slightly south of the entrance to Old Egypt Road. Most of the children, when they were grown, established lives for themselves in Amherst and Leverett, but Chauncy, Marcus, and Lafayette chose to stay in Wendell – at least for a while.

Chauncy married a woman from Middleboro named Lusannah ("Lu") Bryant in 1864 and eventually took over the family home at #102 West Street, living there until his death from chronic myocarditis in 1927.

Marcus was wounded in the Civil War, necessitating the amputation of his left leg below the knee. Returning to civilian life, he married Eliza Brooks, daughter of Wendell boot manufacturer and grocer Thomas Brooks. He operated and later owned his father-in-law’s grocery store on the Common (former site of Deacon Jonathan Osgood’s home at #6 Locke’s Village Road). After Eliza’s death in 1886, Marcus had two more wives, Fanny Packard and Martha Miner (both twenty-one years younger than he), and he moved his grocery business from Wendell to Orange and then to Erving, where he owned much real estate. He died there in 1911, leaving no children, but many nephews and nieces who always remembered him with great respect, according to one of his descendants.²¹⁴

²¹⁴ Stebbins Family Papers, available at the Wendell Library. These papers, compiled by Theo and Charlie Bennett who live in the old Stebbins home on West Street, contain a great deal of information on Marcus, Lafayette, and the entire Stebbins family.
Lafayette Canon Stebbins, the youngest child in the family, apparently couldn’t wait to grow up. In 1861, two weeks after his brother Marcus enlisted in an infantry regiment, Lafayette – who was only fifteen and working as a farm laborer – followed suit. In 1863, he was transferred into the US Army Signal Corps, and in September 1864, at age nineteen, he was taken prisoner at Sabine Pass in Texas while serving on board the gunboat Clifton. Lafayette’s commanding officer wrote a letter to his mother informing her that Lafayette had died of fever in a Houston prison. Some months later, however, Lafayette’s sister Mary, whose husband had enlisted at the same time as Lafayette, received a letter from Lafayette – who was alive and reasonably well and had heard nothing of his supposed death. The commanding officer had made a mistake. After Lafayette’s discharge, he returned to Wendell, where he lived with his sister and her husband. Then, in 1867, Lafayette married Flora Lovett in Pelham, and they moved to Amherst. He worked there as a painter, but was sickly, and at age twenty-seven he died of the consumption he had contracted in prison.

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215 Ibid.
BERIAH OAKES

The home of Beriah Oakes II, born in Bolton in 1781, stood for many years half-way down Bullard Pasture Road on its west side. He married Eunice Ames in Marlboro in 1804, and they had eight children, all of whom died young. In 1845, Beriah petitioned the town to extend Bullard Pasture Road south to “the new road” (Locke’s Village Road, opened in 1837), but when that effort failed and Eunice died of dropsy (edema) in 1851, he moved to that new road between the confluence of two brooks, a place once owned by Albert Bullard, according to Sawin. Sawin described Beriah as “old, stern and saucy,” but nonetheless – one year after his wife’s death – seventy-one year old Beriah married forty-three year old Hannah L. Jones, a second marriage for both of them, and it lasted for over a decade until Beriah’s death from pneumonia at age eighty-two on Christmas Eve, 1863.

Beriah was, of course, a farmer, but he was also an excellent carpenter, having inherited a talent for working with wood from his father, and he owned a sawmill, operated by William Clark, on Whetstone Brook. A prominent Methodist, Beriah’s legacy to the town was the First Methodist Church of Wendell which he built “at great sacrifice”216 at the corner of Jennison and Locke’s Village Roads, where it still stands. A handwritten history of the Methodist Church217 says that a Methodist Society existed in Wendell as early as 1812, but at that time – and for the next almost forty years – the Methodists held meetings at each other’s homes. In his 1874 Historical Discourse, Reverend Beaman said that the earliest members of the Methodist Society included Luther Stone [the first], Joel Drury I and II, Needham, Abel and Silas Drury, Ebenezer Johnson, James Austin, Abel Death and Nellie Stone. One man interviewed by Sawin said that in Dr. Ball’s day (Ball died in 1816), the Methodists held meetings at Luther Stone’s


217 “History of the Methodist Church at Wendell,” undated and unsigned, at the Swift River Valley Historical Society, New Salem, Massachusetts.
place “and were very noisy.” It wasn’t until 1850 that a committee was formed to oversee the construction of a Methodist meetinghouse. Beriah, already in his seventies, must have started work on it fairly soon after his marriage to Hannah because the church appears on the 1858 Walling map.

Details gleaned from the above-mentioned history of the Methodist church include an account of Charles Perry, owner of the hotel and health resort on Mount Mineral on the Wendell-Shutesbury line, who “sometimes occupied the pulpit of the Locke’s Village Church in the absence of the preacher.” He was, however, “not too popular” in his self-proclaimed role. Interestingly, this history reports that his famous mineral spring, to which many people went for its curative powers, was “not a natural one.”

This church history also lists a growing number of needed repairs to the building throughout the last decades of the nineteenth century. Concurrent financial troubles led to the decision in 1877 not to pay the taxes on the parsonage. In 1881, a new name appeared on the Executive Committee, a Mr. Daniel Hager – a distant relative of Martin and Charles Hager. Daniel, a tin peddler, had recently moved to the top of Locke Hill and was proving to be a worthy addition to the congregation despite his chronic tardiness to service. His merit as a bass singer seems to have made up for his inability to be on time. Charles Jennison, who lived in the old Ballard Tavern, once reminisced that Hager’s favorite psalm was number thirty-seven and that “back in the 90s, his tin cart coming into the yard with its picturesque array of brooms, wash-tubs and other household equipment was a welcome sight to the housewife who was thus able to replenish her pots and pans.”

Abel West Wilder, grandson of “Hemlock” Wilder, served as the moderator of the Methodist church from 1863 to 1892 and, in 1885, he was given the added task of building fires and taking physical care of the meetinghouse. In 1886, Wilder’s wage was increased to $5 per year for the same duties.

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218 Ibid.
219 Ibid.
220 Ibid.
In 1896, extensive alterations were made to the church and its interior was modernized. In 1900, horse sheds were built, but then, sometime in the twentieth century, declining attendance forced the church to stop holding meetings.

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We, like Esau, foolishly sold the birthright given us, and lost the blessing we might have had. Commerce carried away the forests...those noble old forest trees are all fallen and gone, and in their place are ten thousand saplings that only remind us of our folly.

- Rev. B. B. Cutler, Wendell Congregational Church, 1874

Poor Wendell! Too bleak to stand competition with the luxuriant west and with the flourishing cities and villages of the river and the east. – Thomas E. Sawin

The table below contains population figures taken from a variety of sources.\textsuperscript{221} Where there was disagreement about the figure, I took an average. Note that the table is not divided into even ten-year intervals.

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From the town’s beginnings, the population grew steadily until 1815 and then dropped by five percent – due, in part, perhaps to the terribly cold weather in the summer of 1816 caused by the volcanic eruption in the Dutch East Indies. Over the next thirty years, population figures continued to fall, but then rose slightly just before making a sharp drop between 1850 and 1854. Holland noted that “in January, 1854, there were 182 houses in the town, 38 [or, twenty percent] of which were vacant.”\textsuperscript{222} Sawin corroborated this mid-century exodus to more dramatic effect:

\textsuperscript{221} These include Sawin’s notes, Wendell censuses, Holland, Wendell School Reports, and the Massachusetts Historical Commission Reconnaissance Survey/Wendell Report, 1982.

\textsuperscript{222} Holland, History of Western Massachusetts, 453.
The sons were led away...for fatter lands and milder climes and they left the feeble to take care of the sires and inherit their fields. It was to them wisdom, but to Wendell it was suicide...Under the chafing hands of time, more than 125 dwellings have crumbled away, leaving their stone chimneys in ruins as so many family tombstones without names.

The downward trend continued – with another big drop between 1860 and 1870 – all the way to 1960 when the population hit an all-time low of 292.223 (Not shown due to space limitations is a small rise between 1875 and 1895 when the number of people in town increased from 503 to 529.) Why was Wendell’s overall story one of population loss rather than growth? And what happened between 1850 and 1854? And, again, between 1860 and 1870?

“IRISH HUTS” PHENOMENON

One of the most surprising facts to show up in Sawin’s notes is really no more than a marginal note. On his Map XIII, he marked a triangular section of land lying just south of the Millers River at the confluence of Bear Mountain Trail and the old Northfield road with a series of Xs; next to these cross marks, he wrote “Irish huts, 1847–1848.” His text, however, does not elaborate on this notation.

In pursuit of more information, I took a closer look at Wendell’s 1850 census. In 1850, for the first time, census takers were instructed to record not only men’s names, but also those of women and children along with some basic personal data like “place of birth” and “occupation.” In that year, a total of ninety-seven people (seventy adults and twenty-seven children) “born in Ireland” were reported to be living in Wendell; and, because the order of names on the census form allows us to follow the footsteps of the man taking the census as he moved from door to door through town, it is evident that these Irish people were living together in a group to the east of where Farley Road meets the river – exactly where Sawin located the “Irish huts.”

The potato famine in Ireland persisted from 1845 to 1851, years in which a million people died in that country and another

million fled, many of them finding their way to America and to Boston in particular. We tend to think of this great Irish immigration as an urban phenomenon, but many also found their way into rural areas as the nation’s nascent railroads pushed west. The vast numbers of Irish immigrants inundating the work force coincided with the expansion of the railroad system, providing it with a steady supply of cheap labor. The Fitchburg Railroad began purchasing land around 1842, and just a few years later Irish workers were laying track in Concord and living in crude shanties or huts alongside the tracks. Thoreau writes at some length about his encounters with these Irish people, and his cabin at Walden Pond was framed with wood from the shanty of a certain James Collins who sold it to Thoreau when he had to vacate for a point further west along with the rest of the railroad’s construction crew. In 1847, Sawin counted fifteen “Irish huts” on the south bank of the Millers Rivers slightly west of the railroad bridge. The Fitchburg Railroad came to Wendell Depot in January 1848 and to Grout’s Corner (Millers Falls) by the end of that year. Two years later, on the 1850 Wendell census, in this particular encampment, there were still thirteen of these Irish huts into which were crammed eighty-two people: forty-one men, eighteen women, and twenty-three children. But by 1860, the encampment had been abandoned, and the owners of the Fitchburg Railroad were using their work force to build the Hoosac Tunnel.

The temporary influx of Irish doesn’t change the downward trend in Wendell’s population, but it does make it less dramatic. If, for the sake of argument, the Irish had never come to Wendell, the town’s 1850 population would have stood at 826, not 908 – that is, a drop of 33 (rather than the increase of 49) from 1840, which would have been in keeping with the diminishing population. And the number of people in Wendell still would have decreased in 1854 to 740, but – without the Irish – the reduction would have been far less dramatic: 86 people, not 168, would have left.
FAILURE TO THRIVE

Sawin gives seven reasons for Wendell’s failure to thrive or what he calls “the impediments to Wendell’s growth:”

1. Its heavy forests, rocky soil and howling winters
2. Its great distance from markets and mills
3. Its neglect of education of its young people
4. The lure of the West
5. The natural decay of the soil
6. The “love of rum and rum-like things”
7. The vice of luxurious dress and food

Certainly the land and soil in Wendell were – and remain – difficult to farm on any large scale, and deforestation, with its accompanying erosion of soil and soil fertility, became a major issue. The lure of the West was also a reality. Reports of vast fertile tracts of land in New York, Ohio, and beyond must have stirred up a lot of excitement. Two prominent factors helped open that new frontier: the coming of the railroad to Wendell in 1848 and the 1862 passage of the Homestead Act, which offered 160 free acres to any settler willing to clear and farm the land. These not only contributed to the draining of Wendell’s population, but also compounded the already strained economic conditions of those farmers who stayed in Wendell. More land and better soil to the west meant bigger and better farms that could quickly and cheaply get their products to the same markets that New England farmers had previously cornered. All these factors, along with the loss of men during and after the Civil War either by death or relocation, could very well account for most, if not all, of the difference between the 1860 and the 1870 Wendell population figures.

One notable feature of the emigration, Sawin said, was that “the town became known pretty extensively in the eastern part of the state for the cheapness of its farms.” Inexpensive farmland may have been the reason for that small influx of twenty-six people between 1875 and 1895.

Regarding Sawin’s charge of neglect in the education of Wendell’s children, Holland noted that

Wendell has, until within a few years, been reluctant in following out the improvements suggested by the Board of
Education. In 1852-3, the rank of the town, based upon the relative amounts of money appropriated for each child by the towns of the state was “281st.” It was the 193rd in the average attendance of its pupils.  

“Reluctant” seems a harsh substitute for the maybe more apt word “unable.” Education requires buildings, books, teachers, and tools – all of which require money. In Wendell’s heyday (c. 1815), the soil had not yet been depleted, the lumber business was a boon for laborer as well as owner, and citizens had enough means to support local endeavors and entrepreneurs. But as the hills were stripped of their trees and the market became more competitive, money became scarce. People moved on or, if they stayed, found themselves in economic hardship. The schools would have been the first to suffer.

And what of “rum and rum-like things?” In Wendell from about 1820 on, Sawin wrote:

> the vice most hideous and consuming was the love of the tavern and of rum and rum-like things. The farms may be counted almost by their falling fences and buildings and by their dreary face, where alcohol has blasted the heart of home and the hand of toil.

In Holland’s essay on Wendell, he stated the following:

> The careful and intelligent correspondent, who communicates the principal facts of this history, says in regard to Wendell, that “it has been a great tavern house, where fathers and sons have rested for a few years, on their way from the ‘lower towns’ to the West; and if the whole household did not go on, the sons were sure to proceed, except the youngest, perhaps, who remained to inherit a worn-out farm – and the worn-out parents.”

As indicated earlier, it seems probable that this “careful and intelligent correspondent” was Thomas Sawin himself. Not only were Holland and Sawin writing their histories during the same years and in the same area of western Massachusetts, but also

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224 Holland, *History of Western Massachusetts*, 456. (There are 351 cities and towns in Massachusetts today; most, if not all, of these were incorporated prior to 1852-3.)

225 Holland, *History of Western Massachusetts*, 457.
Holland’s repetition of some of Sawin’s errors (such as his misidentification of Wendell’s first settler as “Thomas” rather than “Aaron” Osgood) suggests that it was Sawin who supplied Holland with his data. Given, then, that in these two accounts we probably have the biased opinion of only one man – an evidently austere man, probably a teetotaller, with a special intolerance for drinking and drinkers – it is difficult to gage the extent to which alcoholism was a problem in nineteenth-century Wendell. One modern writer, however, paints more of the picture:

Cider production was the primary reason to grow apples into the early 1800s [in New England]. Hard cider was the drink of choice for almost everyone, and was consumed throughout the day. The amounts drunk imply that a certain level of inebriation was endemic, though people of the day looked at rum as being the drink which was most responsible for drunkenness and disorder.\textsuperscript{226}

In light of this, it is significant that Sawin refers to rum specifically. Equally telling are certain line items in the account book of Caleb Alvord, Jr., an import-export merchant who bought lumber, staves, shingles, and barrels from Wendell men and sold back to them salt, sugar, molasses, tobacco – and gin. Alvord’s 1812 ledger reveals, among other things, the drinking habits of men such as Ephraim Sawyer, Joshua Bancroft, Calvin Butler, Martin Hagar, Samuel Macomber, Luther Osgood, and others. Some, like Hagar, were moderate drinkers while others, like John Fisher, the nineteen-year-old son of farmer Jesse Fisher on Bear Mountain, drank more heavily. Alvord’s ledger shows that John bought one gallon of gin from Alvord on November 2, one quart of gin on November 6, one quart of gin on November 11, and one-and-a-quarter quarts of gin on November 25. (Samuel Macomber bought gin and snuff, Joshua Bancroft bought gin and tobacco, and so on. The list is fascinating.)\textsuperscript{227} It may be possible to infer from all this that Sawin was neither exaggerating nor


\textsuperscript{227} Caleb Alvord, Account Books, Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library, Deerfield, Massachusetts.
blinded by his own judgments in his claim that alcohol consump-
tion in Wendell "blasted the heart of home and the hand of toil."
Sawin’s last reason for Wendell’s decline – the vice of luxurious
dress and food – is hard to fathom given the growing prevalence
of poverty throughout the town. This perception must stem from
his austerity. What is irrefutable, though, is the town’s overall de-
cline or failure to thrive. The documented population loss as well
as Reverend Beaman’s Historical Discourse, Reverend Cutler’s
Welcome Address at the Centennial Celebration, agricultural and
manufacturing statistics (see “Mills” and “Other Industries and
Businesses”), and Sawin’s notes all clearly state this.
WENDELL CEMETERIES

Three cemeteries are readily apparent in Wendell today: Center Cemetery next to the meetinghouse at the center of town, South Cemetery on Jennison Road near the Shutesbury line, and the new Osgood Brook Cemetery, established in 2011, on New Salem Road. Two others – the so-called “Smallpox Cemetery” and “Mormon Hollow Cemetery” – are harder to find. A discussion of all the burying grounds in Wendell follows.

CENTER CEMETERY

*and Isaiah C. Soule, Gravestone Cutter*

The land for Center Cemetery was acquired from Jonathan Osgood, deacon of the Congregational church and nephew of first settler Aaron Osgood. The first person to be buried in this graveyard was James Ross (1711–1782), a well-to-do man who had come from Lancaster. He helped found the Wendell Congregational Church, and he provided some funds for the outfitting of Wendell soldiers in the Revolution. The cellar hole of his house, built on a small rise across from #114 Locke’s Village Road, is clearly visible today. His children and grandchildren were raised in Wendell, but most of the latter migrated to Vermont.

Beginning in 1816, grieving families could avail themselves of the services of the local and talented gravestone cutter, Isaiah C. Soule, who lived and worked on what is now Stone Road. (The remains of his barn, cellar hole, and well all lie beside an enormous old lilac bush under the power lines just past the fork of Thompson and Stone Roads.) Bob Drinkwater of the Association for Gravestone Studies (and, amazingly, a relative of Isaiah Soule) has spent many years researching the Soule family, and much of the summary below is taken from Drinkwater’s work.

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228 Foster, “Architecture in Wendell, Massachusetts,” 3.
Isaiah Cushman Soule was born to Beza Soule and his wife, Zerviah, in Middleborough, Massachusetts, on October 24, 1787. Isaiah’s father, several uncles, and grandfather were all gravestone cutters, and both Isaiah and his brother Beza II followed in their well-worn footsteps. Around 1800, Beza I took his family to North Brookfield, where he and his sons “made most of the best slate head and foot stones...standing in the old burying ground.”

About fifteen years later, Isaiah struck out on his own and moved to Wendell.

Isaiah purchased two lots (seventy-six acres) on Stone Road below Bear Mountain, where he built a home and shop for his business. Soon afterwards, he bought a 100-acre lot in an area of Bernardston, where slate was quarried during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; this, Drinkwater suggests, was Isaiah’s source of slate for his gravestones. In November 1822, Isaiah married Fanny Haskins of New Salem, and they had three children: Isaiah II, Ornan, and Fanny. (Isaiah II married Anne Orcutt in 1848, bought a fifty-acre lot near Mormon Hollow, and became a shoemaker; Ornan bought two parcels of land adjoining the family farm, became a butcher, and married Hannah Haskell of Shutesbury in 1855; and Fanny married, also in 1855, Ira Alden of Greenfield.)

At Center Cemetery, Drinkwater found two hundred slate and marble headstones which feature variations of the same urn-and-willow motif and eighty-eight percent of these were made while Isaiah was living in Wendell. Because certain probate records prove that at least some of those stones were carved by Isaiah, Drinkwater suggests not only that all two hundred stones were “likely carved by the same hand(s), at the same shop,” but also that those hands belonged to Isaiah and, possibly, his brother Beza as well. One difference between the work done by the two brothers is that Isaiah’s urns-and-willows were usually carved in low relief, while Beza’s were generally incised line drawings. It is said that Isaiah Soule was responsible for cutting the marble

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stone with its long and, by most accounts, not entirely true epitaph for Ephraim Pratt in Shutesbury. (Pratt’s gravestone claims, among other things, that he lived to be 117 years old.)

In another realm, Wendell’s 1850 agricultural census shows some interesting facts about Isaiah Soule’s farm: its cash value was $1500, the same as that of Daniel Ballard, and half that of Samuel Brewer’s farm. In other words, by the standards of his time and place, he did well for himself. He owned two horses, a pair of oxen, one milk cow, and one pig, and his farm produced twenty bushels of Irish potatoes, 150 pounds of butter, twelve tons of hay, 200 pounds of maple sugar, and fifty pounds of beeswax and/or honey. (According to that census, he was one of only two men in town who kept bees. The other was Joel Howe, son of Ephraim and Esther Drury Howe.) Isaiah is remembered as being a strong patron of the Wendell social library, both contributing and withdrawing books frequently. Sawin seems to have liked Isaiah, calling him “a pleasant man,” but noting that he was “negligent of [his] debts” — which may have had something to do with the fact that hard times fell upon the aging Isaiah in the 1850s and 1860s. The family farm on Stone Road was first mortgaged and then sold at auction; Isaiah and his son Ornan were sued (for undiscovered reasons) and lost; Isaiah’s wife, Fanny, died, and her death was followed by those of Ornan and Isaiah II’s wife, Anne. In 1863, Isaiah removed to Prescott, where he lived near his daughter and her family until his death on July 4, 1877. He died “intestate, but solvent, a few months shy of his ninetieth birthday, having outlived the craft tradition he’d been born into,” states Drinkwater. He is buried next to his wife at Center Cemetery, but the carver of his gravestone unknown.

Point of interest: Wendell resident Jenny Gross, taking a walk on Stone Road in the early 2000s, came upon a broken piece of carved slate. Not knowing anything about Soule, she brought the

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231 Beaman, Centennial Celebration, 19.
piece home because the carved letters were so unusual. When she read my article about Isaiah Soule in the September 15, 2011 Montague Reporter, she told me of her find. The broken piece of slate was clearly a practice exercise carved by Isaiah or, maybe, one of his children.

Genealogical Note:
Isaiah Soule and Bob Drinkwater’s shared immigrant ancestor was George Soule who came from England to Massachusetts on the Mayflower.

SOUTH CEMETERY
Sawin tells us that in 1848 this cemetery, which opened in 1830, contained ten to twelve graves and a tomb to hold bodies over the winter until the ground thawed enough for digging. The tomb is still there, but unused, today. Thomas Sawin as well as his sister, parents, and wife are buried in this cemetery, and many other residents of south Wendell, including members of the Wilder, Ballard, and Fiske families, are also buried here.

“SMALLPOX CEMETERY”232

and the Family of Jabez Sawyer

For many who live in Wendell, the so-called Smallpox Cemetery at the far eastern edge of town holds much fascination. Local lore has it that a traveling tin peddler passed through Wendell in the spring of 1833 and infected some of the townsfolk with the deadly disease. As the story goes, the victims’ bodies were transported in the dark of night and buried at a site as far away as possible from the center of town out of fear of possible transmission of the disease to others. The facts, however, reveal a different story.

232 This account is a slightly modified version of an article I wrote for the January 6, 2011 issue of the Montague Reporter. Its headline was “Smallpox Cemetery Lore Debunked.”
The section of town in question lies at the east end of Wendell’s old road to Morse Village in New Salem. By the mid-nineteenth century, a small settlement and a sawmill had grown up there at the junction of three roads. The 1858 Walling map, aided by Sawin’s data, identifies the homesteads in that hamlet as having belonged to John Dike (the sawmill owner), Ebenezer Felton (a shoemaker), George Green (the man accused of “bastardy”), Joel Howe (the bee-keeper), Townsend Caswell (both I and II), C. Hathaway and, significantly, Jabez Sawyer. Both the 1850 Wendell census and additional existing cellar holes suggest that the area had been even more populated at an earlier time.

Today, the three roads leading to the abandoned hamlet are overgrown and, in some parts, even submerged under beaver ponds. The land has reverted to forest and is a protected wildlife sanctuary. Still, approached from Nielson Road in New Salem, the trail down to the cemetery is clear, wide, and lined with the rotting remains of huge, old sugar maples. A 1989 Wendell Post article contains some recollections of then long-time Wendell resident Rupert Goddard who, in reference to the settlement around the cemetery, said, “It used to be quite a village down there on that road. My mother and father had a house there past the power lines. You know, Kentfield Road goes off to the north a little further on. There was a factory there. My father died when I was
eleven, but if I remember right, he told me it was a hat factory." Today, there is no evidence of that particular factory, but remains of the sawmill indicated on the 1858 map as well as numerous cellar holes, barn foundations, and wells are scattered around the area. All in all, the impression is of a busy, close-knit neighborhood composed of small farms and a mill, not some far-flung, uninhabited place where one might think to bury potentially contagious bodies.

More to the point are the identities of the people buried in the smallpox cemetery and their relationship to each other. The inscriptions on four of the five gravestones read as follows:

*Jabez Sawyer, died January 28, 1849, age 78, “an upright and honest man.”*

*Jemima, wife of Jabez Sawyer, who died of the smallpox, March 11, 1833, age 54.*

*Lydia C. Sawyer, daughter of Jabez and Jemima Sawyer, February 11, 1837, age 22.*

*Patty, wife of Elisha Hagar, Esq., of Halifax, Vermont, died March 16, 1833, of smallpox, age 51.*

The fifth stone, made of marble and badly deteriorated, is almost illegible. All that can be made out is “Otis_ook, Watson, New York _____1833. There are also two footstones, one marked “O.H.” – which adds the first letter “H” to Otis’s last name – and the other “P.H.” for Patty Hagar.

What is immediately clear is that both Lydia and Jabez, dying many years after the three smallpox victims, did not die of that disease. Jabez, Jemima’s husband, must have seen fit to bury their daughter with her mother, and when he himself died in 1849 he must have chosen to be buried with them.

A trip to the town clerk’s office leads to the yellowed pages of an old tome of recorded deaths. In March 1833, three people are listed as having “died of the smallpox:” Jemima Sawyer, Patty Hagar, and Otis Holbrook – which solves the mystery of the identity of “O.H.” But it is genealogical research into these names that strikes pay dirt: everybody in the tiny cemetery is

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related. Despite their different last names and different hometowns, they are family. What’s more, the cemetery lies just past Jabez Sawyer’s cellar hole and barn foundation, leading us to the logical conclusion that this was a family burial plot located on family land.

Here are the details: Jemima Carruth Sawyer and Patty Carruth Hagar were sisters, daughters of Lucy Gary and James Carruth of Templeton, Massachusetts. Otis Holbrook, far from being an unknown itinerant, was Patty’s son-in-law, husband to her daughter, Martha Hagar.

Jabez Sawyer, born in 1770 in Lancaster, built his house near the junction of the three roads almost on the New Salem line in 1797, according to Sawin, and he was the first settler there. A year later, he married Jemima Carruth, (b. 1778 in Templeton). In the recording of their marriage intention, she is said to be “of Gerry,” a misspelling of “Gary” which is the old name of Phillipston, the town next door to Templeton. By 1800, Jabez and Jemima were living in Wendell, and they eventually had six children there: Jabez II, Asahel, Jemima, Levina, Lydia, and Sarah.

Patty Carruth, Jemima’s younger sister, was born in 1782 in Phillipston, where she met and married Elisha Hagar. They had eight children and lived in Halifax, Vermont. After Patty’s death from smallpox, Elisha married Jemima and Patty’s younger sister, Levina, by whom he had a son in 1837 in Halifax. Otis Holbrook may have been the son of Isaac Holbrook and Ruth Sanders. If so, he was born in Colrain in 1803. He and his wife, Martha, Patty’s daughter, probably made Watson, New York, their home.

On a poignant note, town records reveal that Jabez Sawyer II, son of Jabez and Jemima, and his wife, Sally (Pierce), had their second child, a baby girl named Maria Antoinette, on March 18, 1833, exactly one week after the baby’s grandmother, Jemima, died of smallpox.

By 1871, Kentfield Road had been discontinued, while both Morse Village Road and the road down to the twin ponds were still in use – although, according to the old maps, no one lived on this latter road in either 1858 or 1871, and maintenance of it must have gradually stopped. Wendell was one of the last towns
in western Massachusetts to get electricity and it may have been then, in the 1940s, that a great swath was cut across Morse Village Road for the erection of high tension electric lines, which effectively disconnected the old Sawyer, Caswell, Howe, and Felton neighborhood from the rest of town. Some people continued to live on some parts of Morse Village Road well into the twentieth century, as Rupert Goddard said, but in the 1980s it was finally discontinued from just past its fork off of New Salem Road to its end on the New Salem line.

Interesting genealogical coincidence:
Jabez Sawyer’s 3rd-great-grandfather was Thomas Sawyer, a blacksmith, who settled first in Rowley in 1639, then in Lancaster in 1647. A modern resident of Wendell, Garrett Sawyer, who lives on the same road that Jabez Sawyer did almost two hundred years ago, is the 9th-great-grandson of Thomas Sawyer. Garrett, however, is not from Wendell; he and his young family came here only “by accident.” (Thomas Sawyer was the immigrant ancestor of Bezaliel Wilder also.)

“MORMON HOLLOW CEMETERY”
This little cemetery is now part of a privately owned property off of Farley Road as it approaches the Millers River. The graveyard contains two inscribed slate headstones and about two dozen unmarked fieldstones positioned in such a way as to suggest gravestones. The two slate stones are becoming less and less legible as time goes by. One is marked with the name “Charles Woods,” whose death date is given as October 15, 1797, and the other commemorates his infant son, also Charles Woods, who died in 1795. Wendell’s Vital Records, however, contain no mention of either person. It wasn’t until I began delving into the identity of Ephraim Sawyer, owner of the 100-acre lot one over from the Bufford/Bancroft property on Bear Mountain, that I was able to discover something more about Charles Woods, father and son.
Ephraim Sawyer’s son, born in 1795 and also named Ephraim, married Phoebe Woods of Warwick in 1813 (see “War of 1812.”) If I hadn’t found this fact, I never would have thought to check
Warwick’s Vital Records for the Woods name. As it turns out, Phoebe was the older sister of Charles Woods III, the baby buried in Mormon Hollow, and she was also the daughter of Charles Woods II, the baby’s father buried in the same place. Why, though, were these two buried in Wendell, not Warwick, where the Woods were a well-established family?

Sawin’s notes point to an answer. In the 1790s, Charles Woods II and his wife, Sarah Stevens, left Warwick and moved to what is now either #58 or #62 Mormon Hollow Road, located just across the brook from the burying ground. Sarah and Charles may have chosen this site for the burial of their baby – and then for Charles himself – simply for its proximity to their home.

The fieldstones, however, are perplexing. They could, as some suggest, mark graves of Native Americans, or they could have been put there by people who had no material means to mark the graves of their dead in any other way. Sawin made two entries regarding this site, but unfortunately they are not very helpful. One entry says: “Before 1806, there were buried in the burial ground near the banks of the Millers River below Mr. William Flemmings, twenty-six bodies and a few since.” Elsewhere in his notes, Sawin wrote: “Buried in the banks of Millers River, below Mr. William Flemming’s, northwest part of Wendell, December 27, 1804 – twenty-five people. December 20, 1805, Levi, age twelve, son of Jonas Woodward.” From this, we learn the identity of at least one of the people buried beneath an unmarked stone: Levi Woodward who, it appears, was the twenty-sixth person interred at this site. But who were the twenty-five buried before him? And was Sawin saying that they were all buried on the same day? Death records show a total of only eighteen deaths in Wendell that year. Without further information, the story of the people lying in this little graveyard remains shrouded in mystery.

234 The 1858 map shows William Flemming’s house site on Farley Road just above the little Mormon Hollow cemetery.
Our cemetery count is now at four. But historian J. G. Holland, writing in 1854, said that at that time there were five:

Before 1783, 43 deaths were registered; from 1783 to 1800, 134; from 1801 to 1840, 577; from 1841 to 1850, 120; whole number, 874. Their remains lie buried in five graveyards, within the limits of town, and some were doubtless interred in the old burial place in Shutesbury.\(^{236}\)

This fifth graveyard, tiny as it is, must have been known to Sawin – and hence to Holland – because it is located right down the road from the site of Sawin’s farm and because its occupants, grandchildren of Thomas’s uncle Gad Wyeth, were children with whom he was surely acquainted. Today, in the side yard of a house on Jennison Road, the two children’s gravestones lie amidst a thickening tangle of mountain laurel limbs within the embrace of a decrepit stone wall. One inscription reads “Nancy Elizabeth Wyeth, daughter of Nathan and Hannah Wyeth, died January 20, 1830, age 6 years,” and the other commemorates “William Mason Wyeth, son of David and Sally Wyeth, [who] died October 26, 1836, age 2 years, 2 months.” Nancy was her parents’ first-born, while William appears to have been the last born in his family. They were first cousins who never met each other.

The burial plot sits on land once owned by James Tyrer and later by Sawin’s uncle, Gad Wyeth, a Cambridge man who served in the Revolutionary War under General George Washington. As seen earlier, Gad came to Wendell with his wife, Mary (“Polly”) Kendall, in 1793. A tanner by trade, Gad built a large frame house on the corner of Rush and Jennison Roads, and over the next thirty odd years he and Polly raised their four boys and one girl there. A letter from Gad to his sister Anna, dated at Wendell

\(^{235}\) This is an abbreviated and somewhat altered version of an article I wrote for the November 25, 2009 edition of the Montague Reporter.

\(^{236}\) Holland, History of Western Massachusetts, 458.
June 19, 1825,\textsuperscript{237} gives us a brief look into his family life at the time: four of his grown children were living in their own homes in Wendell, two of his sons had participated in a recent religious revival and converted to a different religion, and his only daughter, Mary, had married Silas Stiles, Esq., son of Benjamin Stiles, and gone that past winter to live in Sackett’s Harbor, New York. (They eventually went as far as Milford, Wisconsin, where one of their six children shot himself in the chest and Silas’s brother William killed himself with a hayfork; a May 26, 1857, \textit{New York Times} article\textsuperscript{238} about the suicides blamed them both on spirit rappings, that is, communicating with the spirits of deceased people by tapping out messages on a board or table.) Gad owned about twenty head of cattle, two horses, and many sheep. The stage from Albany to Boston ran by his house three times a week, and he was one of its proprietors. In this letter, he makes mention of other family members, including his two sons, Nathan and David – both of whom had married sisters from New Salem, Hannah and Sally Kellogg – and his new granddaughter, Nancy Elizabeth Wyeth. Several years later, David and Sally gave him a grandson, William Mason Wyeth.

But in 1838, after the deaths of their two little grandchildren and more than four decades in Wendell, Gad and Polly, along with Nathan and David’s families, moved to the town of Liberty, Ohio, where one of Gad’s brothers had already settled. Gad and Polly were buried in Liberty, as were Nathan and Hannah who died there in the 1860s. Little Nancy Elizabeth’s siblings, all of whom survived her, grew up and prospered. Her brother Thomas became the owner of a 900-acre estate in Seven Hickory Township, Illinois, and a banker who was described as being “as bold in his purpose as in form were the hills of his father’s farm [in Wendell] in the state of Massachusetts.”\textsuperscript{239} William Mason’s


\textsuperscript{238} An article reporting the same events appeared in the Wellington (New Zealand) \textit{Independent}, Vol.X, Issue 1243, November 4, 1857, 6, http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=WI18511114.2.21.11

parents outlived Nancy’s, David dying in Liberty in 1881 and Sally in 1892. A history of Liberty mentions a variety of Wyeth family members and their descendants, all of whom gained the respect of their community by their industry, intelligence, and integrity.\(^{240}\)

Nancy Elizabeth and William Mason’s great-grandfather Ebenezer Wyeth (b. 1727) was brother to Noah Wyeth who, as mentioned earlier, was the 3\(^{rd}\)-great-grandfather of the twentieth century’s famous painter, Andrew Wyeth. Knowing this brings the two small children to life in a new way, and their slanting, slate gravestones seem not so much forgotten as tucked away for safekeeping in the woods of Wendell.

### Sisters Hannah and Sally Kellogg, Wives of Brothers Nathan and David Wyeth

The Kellogg sisters’ heritage is an interesting one. Their 4\(^{th}\)-great-grandfather Joseph Kellogg, born in 1626 in England, ran the ferry between Hadley and Northampton. He was in command as sergeant of the Hadley troops in the bloody battle at Turners Falls in 1676. Joseph was also one of the largest taxpayers in Hadley and a selectman five different times. His son Nathaniel was in Deerfield on June 6, 1693, and is said to have alarmed the town when the Indians attacked. Nathaniel’s son Ezekial was a weaver and a prosperous trader with the Indians. In the last French and Indian War, he was in command of the fort at New Salem and was noted for his courage and skill as a fighter. Ezekial’s son Samuel served in the Revolutionary War, and he often spoke of the terrible scenes he witnessed on the battlefield. Samuel’s son Samuel II, father of Hannah and Sally, was a farmer in New Salem.

### ONE MORE?

Sawin cites Reverend Kilburn’s journal as the source for his claim that “before 1782, there were buried in the ground west of Josiah Osgood’s (now Mr. Gates’) forty bodies and probably none since.” Sawin found supporting evidence for this claim from Eunice Leach, widow of Luke Leach and granddaughter of

\(^{240}\) *Memorial Record of Licking County, Ohio,* (Chicago: Chicago Record Publishing Company, 1894), http://files.usgwarchives.net/oh/licking/bios/wyeth.txt
Aaron Osgood. In an interview with Sawin, Mrs. Leach said, "I think that there is a graveyard down farther west of the Gates' place, through his garden. I have seen it!" Mrs. Leach's agreement with Kilburn regarding the location of this sixth graveyard would argue for its having once existed, but it appears that, even in Sawin's time, it had disappeared. The house once occupied by Josiah Osgood and Dwight Gates is today the site of the Kemsley Academy. The land behind the house has been thoroughly altered by National Grid, and immediately west of it (the supposed site of this graveyard), there is nothing but what's left of an earlier rendition of Farley Road and a short stretch of woods that ends abruptly in a beaver pond. Could the graves be there, submerged beneath the water? Until something new comes to light, the graveyard as well as the names of the forty-three people who died before the 1783 opening of Center Cemetery are lost to us.
Over the centuries, many antique houses in Wendell have been lost to fire. Regarding the remaining few, there is much debate as to which house is the oldest and, unfortunately, even Sawin does not definitively answer the question. In some cases, he clearly dates a house to a specific year, while in others he says only that the house was built before (he uses the Latin word, “ante”) a certain date. Photographs of some of the contenders for the title have already been seen, others are shown below. Interspersed among the pictures of the oldest houses are pictures of other old and now defunct homes.

The undated photograph on the left (above) was the Frank Boynton home built in the 1890s on a lane off of Locke’s Village Road, not far south of the Country Store. The photo on the right was taken in the 1940s, sometime after which the house disappeared. Boynton came from Maine and was a house carpenter. While working in the woods in the winter of 1892, a tree fell on him and severely injured his back, requiring him to spend the next year lying in bed. Photographs and information courtesy of Bob Williams, descendant.
In the northeast quadrant of town, this old Cape sits above Old County Road. The 1858 map shows it belonging to Whitman Leach (1823–1865), son of Gardner Leach. On the 1871 map, it is owned by S. Stephens. Sawin guessed that the house was built around 1796 by a Jonathan Kidder, and the current owner believes it could date to as early as the 1780s. Chestnut beams are visible throughout the house, which retains its original features. The picture on the right was taken in 2013; the date of the one on the left is unknown. Notice the two different chimneys. Photograph courtesy of Peter LaFrance.

The Cape on the right stands at #95 West Street and still has most of its original features. Sawin dated it to 1792 and credits Noah Porter, brother of Dr. Daniel Porter, as its builder. Noah died in 1830. The date “1754” is carved into a beam inside this house, but the beam may have been taken from a different, earlier house. The brothers’ father, Benjamin Porter, who came to Wendell in 1766, built a little further north on West Street in 1782, but that house is no longer standing.

The house on the left sits across from the entrance to Gate Lane on New Salem Road. According to Sawin, it was built in 1827 by Townsend “Castle,” or—more likely—“Caswell.” See “Moses Stone.”
The Dexter House at Wendell Depot was a hotel operated by William Dexter, a New Salem man who fought in fifteen battles in the Civil War, was taken prisoner at Drury’s Bluff, traveled by covered wagon to Kentucky selling garden seed, worked in Danforth Putnam’s store at Wendell Depot, and finally ran the hotel. (New Salem Reunion Banner.) Photo reproduced by Ed Judice; www.scua.library.umass.edu. The clothing on the woman indicates that the picture was taken in the late 1800s. The building was destroyed by fire around 2011.

Sawin says that this house on Mormon Hollow Road (present site of Diemand Farm) was built by Zachariah Whitney of Pomfret, Connecticut, before 1792. Current Wendell resident Peter LaFrance noted that chestnut beams were used in its construction – just as they were in the Cape of the same period above Old County Road.

House at #8 Center Street lived in from 1840 to 1857 by store owner, Otis Chittendon. (See his story under “Other Industries and Businesses.”) According to Sawin, Clark Stone built Chittendon’s house in 1804; if this is Stone’s house, it was updated during the Greek Revival period (1825-1860). Photograph courtesy of Alison Wight.

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Throughout New England, water-powered mills appeared with the very first settlers: sawmills for lumber for their houses, barns, and fences; gristmills for converting grain to meal or flour; and cider mills for the production of that ubiquitous drink. The earliest recorded sawmill in the Wendell area was established by Bezaliel Wilder and others on Roaring Brook in Shutesbury in 1737. The terms of their land grant stipulated that they were to “furnish the settlers with good pine boards at forty shillings a thousand for ten years.”

Jonas Locke built a gristmill on Locke’s Pond (Lake Wyola) in 1754, but Aaron Osgood, separated as he was from those places by miles of dense forest, certainly would not have been able to benefit from either Wilder’s or Locke’s mill. So, it must be assumed that, in the beginning, individual men constructed rudimentary mills for their own use. As time progressed, some of these – and others – became commercial ventures. Early mills also determined the location of the first roads.

The 1795 map of Wendell shows a sawmill and a gristmill along the brook that flows down to the Millers River just to the east of Bowen’s Pond (its remains still stand today). Sawin says that the sawmill there was built by Aaron Osgood’s son Luke in 1768, next to Luke’s one-room house. That map also indicates a sawmill on Morse Village Road nearly adjacent to the “Smallpox Cemetery,” probably owned first by Amariah Sawyer and later by John Dike. A note written by Joshua Green at the top of the map says, “The mills are neither of them used except spring and fall.”

As more and more people settled in Wendell, other mills sprung up on the many brooks and streams that run down to the river. Jonathan Crosby built his gristmill before 1780 and his sawmill in the 1790s. Not far to the east of Crosby’s mills, several decades later, John Howe had his saw and shingle mill on what is now Perry Farm Road. On the west side of town, Norman

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Osgood, Lewis Clark, and Osgood’s neighbor, Lance Armstrong, all built sawmills, and Luther Stone built his sawmill on the site of an abandoned gristmill. South of the town’s center, in different places and at different times, Gad Wyeth, Daniel Ballard, and Lyman Fiske all owned sawmills. By the brook on New Salem Road was Joel Johnson’s sawmill which later became the William Phelps Chair, Stock, Stave, and Saw Mill. Joshua Clark, Samuel Foster, and Beriah Oakes owned sawmills in what must have been – even one hundred and fifty years ago – a remote area slightly more than half-way down Whetstone Brook on the New Salem line. In the 1830s, William Putnam built both a sawmill and a gristmill along the Millers River at Wendell Depot. Sawin’s maps show two cider mills: one on Farley Road, almost to the river, and the other (owned by Joseph Fiske) below the Sawin farm on Rockwell Hill Road.

Remains of John Howe’s Saw and Shingle Mill on Perry Farm Road

Lumber was always the most profitable business in Wendell, although after 1830 Holland notes a decline in its manufacture; this may have been due to growing deforestation and an increasingly competitive market. Writing in 1841, Henry Colman, the Agricultural Commissioner for Massachusetts, said that Franklin
County had been cleared “to a considerable extent.”  

Five years later, extant forestland had been so diminished that Sawin spelled out exactly where stands of trees still stood. Nonetheless, Wendell’s lumber industry continued to grow – the trees coming, presumably, from further and further afield. In 1852, there were eight sawmills in Wendell owned respectively by F & D Alexander, Lyman Fiske on Cooleyville Road, Stephen Fiske at Fiske Pond, Z. L. Locke (Ezekial Locke; location unknown), Moore & Gleason on the south end of Wickett Pond, William Putnam at the Depot, William H. Phelps on New Salem Road, and Luther Stone in Mormon Hollow. In that year also, there was a stave mill owned by Calvin Delvee, and Putnam’s grist-mill stood at Wendell Depot. Holland reported fourteen sawmills in 1854, but by 1861, that number had shrunk to ten, and the Beers map of 1871 shows a further drop to eight.

The manufacturing schedule of the 1850 census gives a good idea of what these mills were producing. Here are the figures supplied by three of the town’s lumbermen that year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mill Owner</th>
<th># of logs</th>
<th>Product</th>
<th>$ Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lyman Fiske</td>
<td>50,000'</td>
<td>50,000' of hemlock</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50,000 shingles</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Turned work</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William H. Phelps</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>75,000' hemlock</td>
<td>525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>35,000' hardwood</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Turned work</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke Leach</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>75,000' hemlock</td>
<td>525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>50,000' hardwood</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60 timbers</td>
<td>25,000 shingles</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

244 Ibid.
245 Annual Report of the Wendell Selectmen, 1861, at the Wendell Library.
Shingles are just one example of some of the value-added products the mills produced; others were laths and barrel staves.

Ten years later, the manufacturing schedule shows that William H. Phelps had tripled his production to a total of 350,000 feet of lumber for a value of $3,000. The first steam-powered mill in Wendell appears on the 1858 map just to the west of Wickett Pond, but no figures are available for it. In 1865, Wendell’s sawmills produced 1,180,000 feet of lumber, 2,500 cords of firewood and bark, and 10,000 bushels of charcoal. But, in 1870, Phelps had gone to Northfield, and Stephen Fiske, Luke Leach, and Lyman Fiske were all producing markedly lower amounts of lumber. They were also facing severe competition from Theodore Bemis, owner of a steam-powered sawmill on Locke’s Village Road which was turning out 500,000 feet of pine, 300,000 feet of chestnut, and 200,000 feet of hardwood for a combined annual value of $10,600. In 1880, Edward Goddard erected a wood pulp mill powered by a turbine wheel at Wendell Depot, a business which was earning him $10,125 a year. More advanced forms of the water-powered sawmill, using steam and turbine engines, replaced the older sawmills in the last quarter of the century, but fire sooner or later took them down.

* * *

OTHER INDUSTRIES AND BUSINESSES IN WENDELL

As in many other communities in Franklin County, the braiding of palm leaves for weaving into hats was an important cottage industry in Wendell during many decades of the nineteenth century. This work was done entirely by women and girls, usually in the winter months. As odd as it now seems, palm leaves were imported from South America to Boston and from there contracted out to bleachers and splitters, who then delivered the leaves to families for women and children to braid. Sometimes the braided leaves were sold as a braid to hat manufacturing companies, and sometimes the braiders themselves fashioned their work into hats.

For an idea of the many ways in which people in town earned money to support themselves over the course of time, the following list, gathered from various sources, highlights the cottage and commercial industries, as well as some of the professions, in Wendell from its inception to the close of the nineteenth century:

1781–1830: Incomes were derived from lumber, grain, flax, cattle, sheep, and swine as well as the manufacture of shingles, broom handles, and staves.

1786: Two physicians: J. Fisk and Daniel Porter; one blacksmith: Thomas Atherton.


1815–1860s: Carriage-manufacturer: John Sawin.

1827: A potash manufacturing site, according to Sawin, lay opposite the south end of Old Stage Road on the south side of Jennison Road. (Ashes from the burning of hardwood trees were


250 Holland, History of Western Massachusetts, 457.

251 Everts, History of the Connecticut Valley, 783.

252 Ibid.
used to make lye, necessary for the production of soap, and gunpowder. Potash was a major New England export.\textsuperscript{253}

after 1830: Wool & flax disappeared; there was less lumbering and more palm-leaf hat making.\textsuperscript{254}

1837: In this year, there were 37,000 palm-leaf hats made in Wendell, valued at $5,000; the value of boots and shoes manufactured here this year was $5,250.\textsuperscript{255}

1838: At least one person in Wendell must have been in the quarrying business because “a block of Wendell granite, six feet square, one foot thick, weighing 6,200 pounds”\textsuperscript{256} was used to support the Bloody Brook Monument erected at South Deerfield this year.

1845: A wonderfully informative document based on the 1845 assessors’ returns from municipalities across Massachusetts was published in 1846. The publication lists every town in Franklin County and itemizes each town’s manufactured goods and agricultural products as well as their value. In some instances, the number of employees in the business is also supplied. Here is what is given for Wendell for 1845:\textsuperscript{257}

- Establishments for manufacture of railroad cars and other vehicles, 2; value of vehicles, $1,100; 2 employees
- Chair and cabinet ware manufacturers, 1; value of articles, $340; 1 employee
- Boots manufactured, 10,759 pairs; shoes, 1,400 pairs; value of boots and shoes, $14,481; male employees, 25; female employees, 5

\textsuperscript{253} Cronon, Changes in the Land, 171.
\textsuperscript{254} Holland, History of Western Massachusetts, 457.
\textsuperscript{255} John Warner Barber, Historical Collections...Relating to the History and Antiquities of Every Town in Massachusetts, (Worcester: Warren Lazell, 1848), 274, http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/011542282.
\textsuperscript{256} Luther B. Lincoln, “An Address Delivered at South Deerfield, August 31, 1838, on the Completion of the Bloody Brook Monument,” (Greenfield: Kneeland & Eastman, 1838), 8,http://archive.org/details/deliveredsouthdeero00linco.
• Palm-leaf hats manufactured, 38,521; value $4,761; female employees, 120
• Manufactured wooden ware valued at $2,320; 3 employees
• Lumber prepared, 1,258,000 feet; value $9,000; 12 employees
• Sheep, 383, value $600; wool produced, 1,149 lbs, value $344; horses, 111, value $4,700; meat cattle, 779, value $11,649; swine, 131, value $786.
• Indian corn or maize, 2,630 bushels, value $1,972; 56 bushels of wheat, value $70; 543 bushels of rye, value $407; 657 bushels of barley, value $493; 1,199 bushels of oats, value $400; 7,835 bushels of potatoes, value $1,959; other esculent vegetables, 470 bushels, value $150; 1,154 tons of hay, value $9,232.
• Fruit, 7,610 bushels, value $1,141; raw silk, 10 lbs, value $50.
• 13,325 lbs. butter, value $1,666; 8,895 lbs. cheese, value $630
• 5,000 lbs. maple sugar, value $364

To put the above numbers into context, the chart below\textsuperscript{258} compares and contrasts some of Wendell's annual production figures with those of a few of its neighbors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOWN</th>
<th>Lumber</th>
<th>Boots &amp; Shoes</th>
<th>Palm-leaf hats</th>
<th>Butter</th>
<th>Maple Sugar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wendell</td>
<td>1,258,000'</td>
<td>12,159 pairs</td>
<td>38,521</td>
<td>13,325 lbs</td>
<td>5,000 lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warwick</td>
<td>675,000'</td>
<td>900 pairs</td>
<td>43,200</td>
<td>18,780 lbs</td>
<td>4,200 lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shutesbury</td>
<td>1,028,000'</td>
<td>2,615 pairs</td>
<td>45,644</td>
<td>17,985 lbs</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Salem</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>1,387 pairs</td>
<td>39,841</td>
<td>14,860 lbs</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What emerges from this is a picture of Wendell very much holding its own up to mid-century. It held first place among all the towns in Franklin County for lumber production and boot/shoe manufacturing. The only municipality to exceed Wendell in both of those industries was the city of Orange.\textsuperscript{259}

\textsuperscript{258} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{259} Palfrey, Statistics, 189-212.
Remarkable also is the experiment with raw silk production, showing an attempt by Wendell farmers to compete through diversification. Florence in Hampshire County was successful in its raw silk venture, but only five communities in Franklin County tried their hands at it in 1845: Conway (5 lbs), Charlemont and Gill (12 lbs each), Sunderland, (50 lbs) and Wendell (10 lbs).²⁶⁰

1846: In this year, according to Sawin, there were found in Wendell a chair and shingle maker (Joseph Fiske I), a bedstead-maker, a basket maker, a house painter, a wagon maker, a yoke maker, a sled maker, a physician and law agent (Lucius Cooke), millers, carpenters, twelve shoemakers, a cooper, a gravestone cutter (Isaiah Soule), lumbermen, masons, turners, storekeepers, at least one blacksmith (Samuel French), and a daguerreotypist (Emory Clark). All were also farmers.

1850: Benjamin Badger employed six people and produced 4,000 pairs of boots valued at $6,000; Thomas D. Brooks employed eight people and produced 9,000 pairs of boots valued at $8,280.²⁶¹ At the 1860 census, Benjamin Badger was no longer listed and Thomas Brooks made only half the amount of boots he had made in 1850.

1851: The Washburn, Stone & Company, makers of piano forte cases, was started by Jonathan E. Stone and William B. Washburn in the now defunct village of Stoneville on the Millers River, slightly west of Wendell Depot. Stone (possibly related to Luther Stone of Wendell) bought out his partner in 1857 and, several years later, brought his sons into the company. In 1871-2, Stone purchased the illustrious Mixsell Piano Company on West 42nd Street in New York City. When Stone retired around 1875, his son Charles became sole proprietor. The Stoneville plant consisted of two frame buildings: a three-story 40’ x 75’ building which housed the saw, planing, and turning mill and a two-story 40’ x 80’ building which contained the finishing department. The woodworking machinery was driven by water power and employed between twenty and forty men. A piece of the company’s stationery found at an online auction revealed that Stone’s plant

²⁶⁰ Ibid.
manufactured not only piano cases, but also piano legs, melodeon (a nineteenth-century reed organ) legs, and billiard table frames and legs using both domestic and foreign woods. A description of Stone and his business stated that

Mr. Stone was born here [Erving], bred to his calling, and is an active, energetic, enterprising business man who owes his prosperity to industry and upright dealing...Mr. Stone has effected arrangements with leading New York manufacturers by which he controls the sale of their instruments in Northern New England. [He has] handsome and commodious salesrooms at the village of Orange.262

The Stone piano case factory, in an all too familiar scenario in Wendell, burned to the ground in 1885. Two years later, Jonathan Stone died at the age of sixty.

A Biographical Sketch of Businessman Otis Chittendon

Otis’s father, Luther Chittendon, came to Wendell in 1812 and, two years later, married Deacon Elihu Osgood’s daughter, Mary. Their son Otis was born in Wendell in 1815; when he was four years old, his parents moved to North Leverett where Luther bought 300 acres of land, owned a store, and worked in the tanning business. When Otis was twenty-five, he came back to Wendell, married Sybil Parmenter, and lived in a large house on the east side of the Common (#8 Center Street). He was successfully engaged in the mercantile business until 1852 when his stores were destroyed by fire. He built new buildings, became postmaster, and remained in Wendell until 1857 when he left for North Leverett, where he remained for the rest of his life. (from Everts, History of the Connecticut Valley, 684.)

1852: Blacksmith (Aaron Davis); boot & shoe manufacturer (Benjamin Badger); dry goods & grocery store (William Putnam); pail manufacturer (William Putnam); physician (Lucius Cooke); tailor (Q. Holton); palm-leaf hat manufacturers (Putnam & Chittendon); painter (E.W. Gray); harness maker (David Gage a/k/a/Harris); carpenters (J. Powers and Lyman Sawyer); country stores selling dry goods, groceries & agricultural products (O. Chittendon and William Putnam); boot and shoe dealers and

manufacturers (Benjamin Badger, Thomas Brooks, and Daniel Stratton).263

1855: On Cooleyville Road, Hiram Willis owned an oil distillery that probably produced rosin-oil, used in soap-making, from pine trees. Manufacturing returns indicate that, as of this year, Wendell had fallen from second place in lumber production in Franklin County to sixth place, where it remained for the next decade. In this year also, 7,525 pounds of cheese were made, and butter production increased to 21,091 pounds (up from 13,325 pounds ten years earlier), but boot and shoe production dropped dramatically to only 1,700 pairs.264 Other figures from this year show that Wendell farmers cultivated:

- 1,793 acres for English mowing, producing 876 tons of English hay
- 147 acres of Indian corn, producing 31 bushels per acre
- 115 acres of potatoes, producing 87 bushels per acre
- 86 acres of oats, producing 26 bushels per acre
- 63 acres of rye, producing 11 bushels per acre
- 1,598 apple trees

1858: The Walling map, printed this year, shows that Putnam owned a store at Wendell Depot.

1860: Ornan H. Soule, brother of the gravestone cutter, operated a butchery, selling beef, veal, and mutton; this year, he sold 25,000 pounds of beef, valued at about $500.265

1865: This year, six municipalities in Franklin County were producing charcoal; Wendell, with its 10,000 bushels, ranked second highest (Shutesbury was first). According to manufacturing returns for this year, seventy percent of the work done at Stone’s Piano Case factory in Stoneville was done on the Wendell side of the Millers River. Value-added agricultural products dropped considerably this year: maple sugar was down to 2,000 pounds, butter decreased to only 1,050 pounds, cheese to just 500 pounds.

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263 Adams, The Massachusetts Register, 1852.
264 DeWitt, Statistical Information, 206.
Palm-leaf hats were also down, worth only $1,500\textsuperscript{266} (compare to 1837 and 1845 above).

1870: Timothy Harrington, an itinerant blacksmith doing business in Sunderland, Leverett, and Wendell, took over Samuel French’s home and blacksmith business (his house was next to today’s Senior Center on Montague Road and his shop was across the street). Harrington’s account books from 1864 to 1870\textsuperscript{267} contain the names of many Wendell businessmen – John Sawin, Theodore Bemis, Daniel Ballard, Ephraim Locke II, Thomas Brooks, Dr. Orin Andrews, Joseph Needham, Luke Leach – and other residents with whom Harrington did repeat business. The most frequent jobs he performed for his clients were the shoeing of horses and cattle and the mending of chairs. Other items Harrington fixed were mill irons, ring bolts, chisels, sleds, sleighs, wagons, carriages, neck-yokes, draw hooks, hay pullers, whiffletrees, and springs. He also made bolts, spikes, drills and footings for andirons, and hooped tubs. For his services, he was either paid in cash or by barter: Bemis, who owned a gristmill, paid him in pounds of meal, Daniel Ballard paid with maple sugar and gallons of “maple molasses,” Theodore Haskell paid with old scythes (scrap metal), and someone named Paul Gatnow pastured a cow for him.

1871: Physician & surgeon (Orin Andrews); manufacturer & dealer in lumber and chair stock (Theodore Bemis on Locke’s Village Road); station agent at Wendell Depot (J. C. Brown); farmer & jobber (Aaron Fisher); manufacturer and dealer in lumber (Luke Leach); farmer and engineer (Nicholas Laux); merchant and lumber dealer (D. Putnam); dealer in dry goods (Marcus M. Stebbins).\textsuperscript{268}

1872: “At eleven o’clock on [February] the 20\textsuperscript{th}, the engine in T. Bemis & Son’s sawmill exploded, scattering everything in wild confusion, demolishing buildings and utterly destroying everything in its reach, but providentially no one was injured.

\textsuperscript{266} “Population and Statistics of Franklin County,” Greenfield Gazette and Courier, September 4, 1865.
\textsuperscript{267} Timothy Harrington, Account Books, Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library, Deerfield, Massachusetts.
\textsuperscript{268} Inset, 1871 Beers Map, Wendell, Massachusetts.
A number of workmen were outside the mill at the time of the explosion.\textsuperscript{269}

1875: Jonathan Stone’s Piano Case Factory accounted for sixty-six percent of Wendell’s total production.

1879: Although palm-leaf hats were braided by a majority of the women in town, the small yield this year was no doubt due to the population decline.\textsuperscript{270} At #2 Center Street on the Common, there was a hotel.

1880s: The Goddard Paper Company at Wendell Depot, a wood pulp and paper production business that employed nineteen people in 1885, burned to the ground at eight o’clock in the evening on February 26, 1894.\textsuperscript{271} Further east along the Millers River on the Wendell side was the Farley Paper Company, established in 1888.

\textsuperscript{269} Greenfield Gazette and Courier, (February 26, 1872).

\textsuperscript{270} Everts, History of the Connecticut Valley, 782.

\textsuperscript{271} This information is written on the back of a photograph of the smoldering remains of the Goddard mill. Photograph purchased on eBay, 2014, now on file at the Wendell Library.
At the onset of the war, Sawin claims, Wendell was in debt for $5,000 and had “a powerful democratic opposition to the war of the government against the Secession [agenda] of Jefferson Davis and company and could not obtain a vote to help the volunteers.” And yet, as the nation became more and more entrenched in this “Great Rebellion,” Wendell stepped up to the plate and did more than its fair share in supporting the Union. An article, clipped by Sawin from the *Springfield Republican* of February 8, 1862, reported that

*The town of Wendell has now over thirty volunteers in the Federal Army, being about 1 in 22 of its inhabitants or double the proportion necessary to make up the 500,000 volunteers voted by Congress for the suppression of the rebellion. The number of soldiers’ families aided by the town is eight, the amount issued to them up to January 1, 1862 was $201.*

As we know, Wendell’s population fell precipitously between 1850 and 1854, and by the start of the Civil War it totaled no more than 650 to 700 people, depending on which source is consulted. It is staggering, then, to learn that the town, over the course of the war, sent off about sixty of its men to join the Union troops – almost ten percent of its total (adults and children) population! In a town already weakened by the loss of so many of its citizens, the impact of that many able-bodied young men leaving their family farms must have been crippling. Some men returned physically debilitated, some came home briefly before resettling elsewhere, and some, of course, never returned at all. If the 1850s were the turning point, the Civil War years cemented the downward spiraling of the town. By 1870, Wendell’s population had further declined to 540, leading the Reverend B.B. Cutler at the Congregational church’s centennial celebration in 1874 to bemoan what he saw as the wasting of Wendell:

*We, residents of Wendell, cordially welcome you, visitors, ... to these old hills and hollows, stone walls and cellars, built and dug by your fathers and ours; to that which remains of what once was, and regret that we have not the*
privilege of making a better show...[V]itiated appetites played the saddest game with us, so that what we might have become we are not...those noble old forest trees are fallen and gone...And the once extensive cattle-thronged fields and pastures on the hillsides are overgrown with brush and wild weeds. Many went from us.

In real terms, the valuation of Wendell in 1860 was $232,771, but only five years later, at the end of the war, it had fallen to $201,657. Economic action taken during those years includes the following: in 1861, the town appropriated $1,000 for the payment of state aid to the families of volunteers; in 1862, the town voted to pay a bounty of $100 to each volunteer who would enlist in military service and be credited to the quota of Wendell; in 1863, recruitment and payments to state aid continued; and, in 1864, the town voted to raise $750 to procure volunteers and to increase the bounty paid to any volunteer to the amount of $125.272

Sawin states also that Wendell’s three postmasters – O. T. Brooks and J. G. Creigh, both store keepers in Wendell Center, and Horace Murdock at the Depot (“in [the] room of William Putnam, [storekeeper] of infamous note”) – were removed by the “Post Office Department” in September 1861. All three were Democrats, and their replacements were Republicans, the party that put Lincoln into office. Sawin was not given to address political issues in his notes, but to this information he adds, “The Democratic Party of Wendell are tainted strongly with slavery and rebellion.”

Joe Coll, a current-day resident of Wendell, history teacher, and Civil War reenactor, has researched the part Wendell played in the Civil War and found an account of some Wendell men who walked to Greenfield and back in one day in order to enlist in the service. Coll has also found evidence that a few of the Wendell volunteers ended up in the Balloon Corps, a new division of the military at that time.

Thirteen surviving letters home from Hollis Smith Wrisley provide first-hand accounts of a Wendell soldier’s experiences in the Civil War.\(^{273}\) His letters are short and fairly unemotional, hinting at but never fully reporting on the appalling conditions to which the men were repeatedly subjected. Two years after his enlistment, with his health failing, he wrote from a camp near Coal Harbor, Virginia, to his “friend Lu” (Luana Rice, who later became his wife) the following account, dated May 31, 1862:

...we left Williamsburg on the 15\textsuperscript{th} and started towards Richmond. We have to move slow as we are in a dense [sic] swamp. We have had a good deal of wet weather and the roads are awful...I have been sick a week...and it is not to be wondered at, marching in the rain and sleeping on the wet ground and not half enough to eat and that salt meat and hard bread...\(^{274}\)

And the following week, from a battlefield six miles outside of Richmond, he injected some levity into his account of the battle’s gruesome aftermath:

\textit{There was a great slaughter here. The line of battle was some three miles long and the ground was covered with dead, in some places 4 and 5 deep...there is a rebel buried not more than 18 inches from my tent, so I have a dead man on one side and a live on the other. Think the dead one is the least trouble as he don't snore. When our reg. arrived here, it was dark. The men were tired and laid down in the most convenient place. The next morning, one man found his head between a dead rebel's feet. You may think this is awful, but it is nothing after one gets use[d] to it.}\(^{275}\)

Of the sixty-plus Wendell men that are found to have served in the Civil War, forty-five (almost three-fourths) suffered some form of physical debilitation: fourteen died in the war, four died soon after the war as a result of incurred injuries or illness, and twenty-seven were marked by wounds or chronic disease for the


\(^{274}\) Brown, Massachusetts Review, 571.

\(^{275}\) Brown, Massachusetts Review, 573. Wrisley’s letters contained almost no punctuation. For clarity, I have added it to both quoted passages.
rest of their lives. We can only guess at the psychological scarring on the nineteen who emerged “unharmed.”

**Men Born and/or Living in Wendell Who Went to the Civil War**

In the following short sketches, names of family members who also served in the war are written in bold print. If the soldier’s family is written about elsewhere in this book, the reader is directed there – as, for example, “See Luther Baker.” MVA is an abbreviation of Massachusetts Volunteer Army, and VRC stands for Veteran Reserve Corps (originally Invalid Corps), a military reserve organization within the Union Army that was formed during the Civil War to allow partially disabled or infirm soldiers to finish out their period of service performing light duty only.\(^{276}\) Captured Union soldiers were often taken to the notorious Andersonville Prison in Georgia. During its fourteen months of existence, it held 45,000 men (at least four times its capacity) under the most terrible conditions; 13,000 died there.

**ALLEN, Horace B.** On the 1860 census, Horace was fifteen years old and living (for undiscovered reasons) with his older sister at the home of Silas and Sarah Drury of Wendell. The date of his enlistment is not known, but he claimed to be eighteen. He served in the 27\(^{th}\) Infantry Reg., Co. B, and the 57\(^{th}\) Reg., Co. F. One source says he was discharged for disability on September 22, 1862 (when he would have been only seventeen years old); another says “discharged from the War Department, August 10, 1865.”

**ARMSTRONG, Joel Mason.** Born in Wendell in 1833, he was the son of Deacon Martin Armstrong and Mary Bent Armstrong. He was a twenty-nine-year-old carpenter in September 1862 when he enlisted in Sunderland in the 52\(^{nd}\) Infantry MVA. Strong and in good health, he survived the war without mishap, married Wendell school teacher Ellen L. Leach, and lived a total of forty years in Sunderland where he was a farmer, house builder, town treasurer, and selectman.

\(^{276}\) The biographic information in this section has been gathered from many sources, including Vital Records, US Civil War Soldier Records and Profiles, 1861–1865 at www.ancestry.com, census records, A Record of Sunderland in the Civil War by Jesse L. Delano, Eugene Bullard’s History of New Salem Academy and the New Salem Academy Reunion Banner.
BAKER, David. He was born in Wendell in March 1838, the brother of Edward Baker and George Baker; all were sons of Luther and Hannah Baker. In 1861, when he enlisted in the 25th Infantry, Co. I, he was twenty-three and a chair-maker. Three years later, while on active duty, he died of dysentery.

BAKER, Edward. Born in Wendell in January 1844, he was the brother of David and George Baker. He was a nineteen-year-old farmer when he enlisted in the Navy in February 1863. Most of his war experience was on the Mississippi River and in the blockade of Mobile. He was discharged in May 1864, a year of tragic losses for his family (see “Luther Baker”). At the end of his life, in failing health, he moved in with his nephew Ozro Baker in Millers Falls. (In the 1930s, Ozro Baker was involved in a notorious political battle which terminated with the Wendell Board of Selectmen being imprisoned for three weeks; see “Charles M. Ballou”). Edward died in 1936, aged ninety-two.

BAKER, George. Born in Wendell in 1833, he was the brother of Edward and David Baker. He married Susan Gilbert in September 1856, and he enlisted in the 25th Infantry, Co. I, in January 1864. A few months later, he was wounded at Drury’s Bluff by a bullet to the abdomen; he lived for twenty-four hours and died on May 17, 1864, at age thirty-one.

BALL, Daniel. He was an eighteen-year-old farmer when he enlisted as a private in the 27th Infantry MVA, Co. C. He was captured at Drury’s Bluff and died a POW at Charleston, South Carolina, in October 1864. He was the son of John C. Ball and Lydia Comins (see “Reverend John C. Ball”).

BALLARD, Daniel E. A Wendell native, farmer, and teacher, he enlisted in the 52nd Infantry MVA, Co. D, in 1862, at the age of twenty-two. He served in Louisiana for nine months and then returned home, “broken down in health and reduced to a mere skeleton.” Eventually, he grew strong enough to run his father’s lumber business with his brothers. (See “Daniel Ballard”).

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277 Leading Citizens of Franklin County, 213.
BALLARD, Milton. A brother of Daniel Ballard, he served in the 34th Mass Infantry MVA, Co. D. Before joining the service, Milton, like many in his family, attended New Salem Academy (1862-3). He returned from the war, but died of chronic diarrheaa in February 1866, at twenty-one years of age. He is buried in Wendell’s South Cemetery.

BARNES, Lauriston. He was a twenty-six-year-old machinist living in Wendell when he enlisted in the 52nd Infantry, Co. G, in August 1862. He mustered out in August 1863. In 1880, he lived in Athol with his wife and three children and was working as a locomotive engineer. He died at age fifty-one in Orange.

BLAIR, David. Born in Wendell in 1841, he was the second son of Hiram and Charlotte Blair. He was twenty-one and a farmer when he enlisted in September 1861 in the 27th Infantry, Co. B. He, along with his brothers Hiram and Joseph Blair, was taken as a POW at Drury’s Bluff, and he died of disease at Andersonville, July 24, 1864.

BLAIR, Hiram. Born in Wendell in 1836, he was the first son of Hiram and Charlotte Blair. Writing before the war, Sawin described Hiram as a “drunkard” and noted that he was “in Greenfield jail for abusing his family.” At age twenty-six, he was working as a mechanic when he enlisted in the 27th Infantry, Co. B. He was captured at Drury’s Bluff, along with his brothers David and Joseph Blair, on May 16, 1864. He was in prison at Andersonville before being exchanged in February 1865. He mustered out in June 1865, after serving for three years, ten months, and six days and having suffered from scurvy. In February 1866, he married Jane Hannah Death-Davis White, the widow of Lyman Wheeler White.

BLAIR, Joseph. Brother of David and Hiram Blair, he was born in Wendell in 1843, the third son of Hiram and Charlotte Blair. He was a farmer, age twenty, when he enlisted in the 27th Infantry, Co. C. He, too, was captured at Drury’s Bluff and died a POW at Andersonville in July 1864 – ten days before his brother David died there.
BROOKS, Herbert F. Nineteen and a mechanic, he enlisted in the 10th Infantry, Co. G, in June 1861, and he was discharged in September 1862 for disability. His father, Thomas D. Brooks, a shoe manufacturer and proprietor of a general store on the southwest corner of the Wendell Common, served the town in many public offices, and “during the Civil War, he rendered valuable assistance to the volunteers of Wendell and contributed liberally toward providing for their families.”

Herbert’s brother Otis served for a time as Postmaster in Wendell and was, with a third brother, also in the grocery business in Wendell and elsewhere. Herbert attended New Salem Academy (where his father was on the Board of Trustees) from 1856 to 1859, went to war, was town clerk in Wendell in 1864 and 1865, and then worked as a traveling grocery salesman, living in Brattleboro, Vermont. He died in 1911.

BULLARD, Mark. Born in Wendell in 1842, he was the son of Silas Bullard and Hannah Morse Hager. As an eighteen-year-old farmer, he enlisted in the 52nd Infantry MVA, Co. A on September 3, 1862, in Greenfield. He survived the war, married Sophia Osgood, and lived in Greenfield until his death there in 1924. (See “Silas Bullard” under “Clark Family.”)

ELLIS, Chester A. Born in New Salem in 1847, he was one of seven children of Edward H. Ellis and Harriet Schunk Merriam. His family doesn’t appear to have lived in Wendell, but Wendell was where he enlisted in April 1862 in the 21st Infantry, Co. I. He lied about his age, saying he was eighteen instead of his actual fourteen years. Four months later, he died from disease on July 16, 1862, at Beaufort, South Carolina. He is buried in New Bern National Cemetery, North Carolina.


#28560, Section 10, Site 1681.
GROUT, John. A twenty-seven-year-old farmer and son of Elihu and Abigail Grout, he was a wagon-maker and a wheelwright before becoming a private in the 26th Infantry, Co. K. Sawin had a poor opinion of the man. He was discharged for disability at Ship Island, Mississippi, April 10, 1862. He was the brother of William Grout.

GROUT, William H. Son of Elihu and Abigail Grout, he appeared as “farmer” on both the 1850 and 1860 Wendell censuses. He enlisted at nineteen in the 26th Infantry, Co. K, and was discharged for disability at New Orleans in October 1862. He was the brother of John Grout. He returned to Wendell after the war and married, in March 1864, eighteen-year-old Ellen S. Davis, daughter of William and Elizabeth Davis of Wendell.

HAMMOND, Jarius T. He was born in Wendell about 1839 to Thomas Hammond, a cordwainer, and Parmelia Reynolds. The family lived in Warwick in 1850 and in Wendell in 1860 and 1870. Jarius had five siblings, one of whom was Isabelle, wife of Nathan Bond Putnam of Wendell Depot. Jarius was twenty and a mechanic when he enlisted in the 26th Mass Infantry, Co. B, in 1861. He was discharged as a corporal. By 1870, he was married to Mary Mahana, had two children, and was working at a “piano shop,” undoubtedly the J. E. Stone Piano Leg and Case factory at the Depot. In 1880, they were living in Orange, where he worked as a carpenter.

HILDRETH, William. A forty-four-year-old farmer who had moved with his wife, Lucinda, from Billerica to Wendell, he enlisted in September 1861 in the 26th Infantry, Co. K, and died from disease in New Orleans, October 6, 1863.

HOLDEN, William G. He served in the 30th Mass Infantry MVA, Co. B, from 1861 to 1865. He was buried in Wendell’s South Cemetery in 1911.

HOWE, Myron. Son of John and Sophia Howe and brother of Harlan Howe (see “Abel and Ephraim Howe”), he lived in Wendell until he reached adulthood. In 1863, he was living in Northampton, where he enlisted, at age twenty-one, in the 34th Infantry MVA, Co. D. Two years later, he was transferred to the 24th Infantry.
LEACH, Elisha B. In 1861, when he enlisted in the 26th Infantry, Co. K, he was an eighteen-year-old farmer living with his mother, Laura, and two siblings in Wendell. He was promoted to full corporal, but wounded on September 19, 1864, at Winchester, Virginia, where he died about a month later.

LEACH, Humphrey Scott. Born in Wendell in 1831, he was a grandson of Gardner Leach and a son of Chester and Mary Humphrey Leach. He lived with his family in Wendell until the early 1850s, then married and moved to Leverett. He was living there with his wife and two children and working as a watchman when he enlisted in August 1862. Two months later, he was promoted to sergeant in the 52nd Infantry, Co. F. After the war, he became a justice of the peace and special county commissioner for the School Committee. He died in Worcester in 1898.

LONGDO, Frank (Francis). He was a sixteen-year-old French-Canadian shoemaker who added two extra years to his age when he enlisted in the 2nd Heavy Artillery, Co. G, in July 1864. He was later transferred to the 17th Infantry. He was the brother of Joseph Longdo. Different sources give different spellings of this family name, but it was probably “Longdeau.” The Longdeau parents were from La Prairie, Quebec, according to Wendell birth records. There is no trace of Frank after the war. In 1870, his sister Hattie was on the Wendell census as “Hattie Alondo,” seventeen, who gave her occupation as “seating chairs.” She was living with another French Canadian family whose name appears on the census as “Collett.”

LONGDO, Joseph, Jr. He was nineteen and working as a painter when he entered the 57th Infantry, MVA, in January 1864. He was promoted to corporal in May 1864, and wounded two weeks later in the bloody Battle of the Wilderness in Virginia. He died at Washington, D.C., May 31, 1864, and is buried in National Cemetery. He was the brother of Francis Longdo.

OAKS, Dexter H. A mechanic, he enlisted at age twenty-two in the 27th Infantry, Co. B, in September 1861. He was captured at South West Creek, North Carolina, on March 8, 1865, exchanged March 27, 1865, and discharged June 26, 1865.
OATMAN, Alvah B. Born in New York state in 1835, he was living with his wife in Wendell in 1860. He was a farmer, age twenty-seven, when he enlisted in the 27th Infantry, Co. C, in August 1862. He was discharged two years later. In 1870, he was a hotel proprietor in New Salem, but by 1885, he was back in Wendell, a farmer on “Wendell Center Road.” He died in 1894.

PACKARD, Merrick A. Born in Erving in 1840, he married, at age twenty-one, Alzina Blair, eighteen, sister of Hiram, Joseph and David Blair. He was a farmer. Merrick enlisted in the 27th Infantry, Co. C, in February 1864. Barely one month later, Alzina delivered a baby girl whom Merrick probably never saw. He was captured at Drury’s Bluff and died of scurvy at Andersonville on August 11, 1864.

POWERS, Austin. Born about 1819, he was a forty-four-year-old farmer in Wendell when he enlisted in December 1863 in the 34th Infantry MVA, Co. C. He was transferred to the VRC in October 1864 and mustered out in August 1865.

PUTNAM, Nathan B. He was born in 1827 in Orange (probably West Orange where so many Putnams lived). In 1850, he was working as a lumberman and living at Wendell Depot with his parents, William and Julia Putnam, and his seven siblings. (William Putnam was the store-owner at the Depot who got into trouble selling liquor; see his name under “Miscellanea.”) In January 1855, Nathan married Isabelle Pierce Hammond, sister of Jarius Hammond. Registering the birth of one of their children in 1857, he gave his occupation as “mechanic.” When he enlisted in the 34th Infantry MVA, Co. F, in December 1863, he was thirty-six years old and employed as a “pail-maker.” He was transferred to the 24th Infantry MVA, Co. A. In 1880, he was working as a carpenter in Orange. He died in 1907 in Athol.

RICE, Edwin C. A farmer, he was nineteen when he enlisted in the 21st Infantry MVA, Co. B, in 1861. He was discharged in October 1862 and re-enlisted. He was a son of Hosea B. Rice. He survived the war, and in December 1867 he married Lucy Fiske in Wendell.
RICE, George L. Three years younger than his brother Edwin C. Rice, George was eighteen when he enlisted in the 34th Infantry MVA, Co. K, in December 1863. He was transferred to Co. G in June 1865. He survived the war, returned to Wendell, and married Gertrude Rice in May 1872. At the time of their marriage, George was a resident of Greenfield and Gertrude lived in Wendell. Rice seems to have been Gertrude’s maiden name, and they were probably related.

RICE, Hosea B. He was a mechanic who enlisted in October 1861 in the 27th Infantry MVA, Co. B. He was discharged for disability in April 1862. His enlistment papers give his age as forty-five, but we know from the 1850 Orange Census and the 1860 New Salem Census that he lied about his age when he enlisted by making himself thirteen years younger than his actual age of fifty-eight. He was the father of Edwin C. and George L. Rice. His daughter Charlotte married Horace Whitaker. After the war, Hosea was living in Wendell for both the 1870 and the 1880 censuses. According to a history of the Methodist Society in Wendell, Hosea Rice’s name appears on the church records beginning in 1870 as the man in charge of “seating strangers.” Hosea died in Athol in June 1892.

SAWIN, Alpheus H. Born in Wendell in 1833, he was Thomas Sawin’s nephew (son of Thomas’s brother, John Sawin III). In 1862, he was nineteen when he enlisted in the 52nd Infantry MVA, Co. F. He was promoted to corporal, survived the war, and became—in keeping with family tradition—a wagon wheel maker. Some disease or wound received in the war no doubt contributed to his early death in Montague in 1870.

STEBBINS, Lafayette C. He was only fifteen, but gave his age as eighteen in October 1861, when he enlisted in the 26th Infantry MVA, Co. K. He was the brother of Marcus M. Stebbins. (See “Marcus and Lafayette Stebbins” for details of Lafayette’s service and his reported death.)

280 Written in long-hand and unsigned, this history is on file the Swift River Valley Historical Society, New Salem, Massachusetts.
STEBBINS, Marcus M. The brother of Lafayette Stebbins, Marcus was a twenty-year-old mechanic when he enlisted in September 1861 in the 26th Infantry MVA, Co. K. He was promoted to sergeant and, in September 1864, was wounded at Winchester, Virginia, which necessitated the amputation of his left leg below the knee. He was discharged for disability in July 1865. (See “Marcus and Lafayette Stebbins.”)

STEVENS, Henry Willard. Henry was a twenty-three-year-old farmer living in Wendell in August 1862, when he did two life-changing things: he married sixteen-year old Adelaide A. Green, daughter of Henry Green and Almira Joy, and he enlisted in the 27th Infantry MVA, Co. C. He was discharged in September 1864, but no more is known of him until his death in Athol in 1912.

STONE, William H. Born in Colrain, he does not appear to have been related to any of the Stone families in Wendell. But, in 1860, he was living in Wendell and working as a farm laborer for W. I. Strong (at #240 Farley Road, former home of Abel Death). In March 1862, at nineteen, he enlisted in the 27th Infantry MVA, Co. B. He was made corporal in September 1864, but died of disease on February 2, 1865, in New Bern, North Carolina.

TAYLOR, William Jefferson. He was the son of Artemas and Hannah Taylor of Wendell. In May 1853, he married Charlotte G. Blair, sister of Hiram, Joseph, and David Blair. He and Charlotte had six children in Wendell before his enlistment at age thirty-three in the 34th Infantry MVA, Co. C, in December 1863. William was captured near Cedar Creek, Virginia, in October 1864, and he died from disease one month later at Richmond.

WHITAKER, Daniel Baxter. He was born in Wendell in 1831. On the 1850 Wendell census, he was nineteen and living with his parents, Jonathan and Charlotte Ballard Whitaker, and his three siblings: Jonathan, Josiah, and Lucinda. (See “Daniel Ballard,” this Daniel’s great-grandfather.) In 1862, at thirty-one, he enlisted as “Baxter Whitaker” in the 52nd
Infantry MVA, Co. F, in Montague. He died at Port Hudson, Mississippi, on July 22, 1863.

**WHITAKER, Horace.** Born in 1832, he grew up in New Salem and attended the Academy there in 1848. In 1856, he married Charlotte Robbins Rice, daughter of Hosea B. Rice. They lived in Wendell, close to the junction of Jennison and New Salem Roads. In September 1861, he enlisted in the 27th Infantry MVA, Co. B, as a twenty-eight-year-old farmer. He was discharged for disability in April 1862. Horace and Charlotte were still in Wendell in 1863, but by 1870 they had moved to New Salem, where they lived with his mother and four children. Horace worked as a painter and a paper-hanger. In 1900, they were in Athol, where they both died: Horace in 1911 and Charlotte in 1928.

**WHITE, Eli Thomas.** Born in Greenwich in 1824, he was the brother of Lyman Wheeler White. (Another brother was named Perley White!) In 1850, Eli was living in Shutesbury with his wife, Betsy Alice Boynton, two children, and a fourteen-year-old girl named Nancy L. Hammond. Nancy appears to have been Jarius Hammond’s sister (same age, same name), but why she was living with the Whites is unknown. In the 1860 Wendell census, Eli, Betsy, and their four children were living next door to John and William Grout. Eli was thirty-seven and a farmer when he enlisted in the 26th Infantry MVA, Co. K. He was discharged for disability in October 1862. In late 1863, three of their children died in Wendell, two of diphtheria, and one of consumption. In 1870, Eli, Betsy, and their two remaining children, Henry, twenty, and George, five, were in Vernon, Vermont. Eli died in Newfane, Vermont, in June 1878, at the age of forty-four. Sawin called Eli White “a toper [a drinker] and a fighter.”

**WHITE, Lyman Wheeler.** Born in Greenwich about 1819, he was the brother of Eli White. In November 1861, he married Hannah Jane Death-Davis (her father, Oliver, changed the family name from Death to Davis; see his name under “Miscellanea”). Lyman was forty-two and she was twenty-two, and they were both living in Wendell. Their marriage probably occurred just before he enlisted in the 26th Infantry
MVA, Co. K. He was discharged for disability in October 1862 at New Orleans, and he must have died sometime in the next few years because, in 1866, Hannah Jane married Hiram Blair.

WILDER, Henry. Born in Wendell in 1842, he was the son of Levi Wilder, grandson of Bezaliel Wilder II, and great-grandson of Bezaliel Wilder I, one of the first settlers of Wendell. (See “Bezaliel Wilder”). Henry enlisted at Sunderland in the 52nd Infantry MVA, Co. G, and served in Louisiana. He returned home in ill-health and married Isabelle Shaw of Amherst in 1865. A carpenter by trade, he was working in a chair shop in Orange when he received a severe injury to his hand, the effects of which led to his death on April 12, 1869. He is buried in Sunderland.

WILLIAMS, Amos Leonard. The elder brother of George, Lucian and Francis Tyler Williams, he was born in Montague to John Williams and Cordelia Wilmoth Williams in 1832. He was a twenty-seven-year-old laborer (Sawin says “a mechanic”) when he enlisted in the 10th Infantry, Co. G, in Wendell in June 1861. He spent three months in the Balloon service and was discharged in July 1864. He was a stone mason by trade, and he married Mahala Goodnow in Orange in 1872.

WILLIAMS, George M. He was the brother of Amos, Lucian and Francis Tyler Williams. He was twenty-three and working as a farm laborer for lumberman and carpenter Luke Leach in Wendell when he enlisted in the 27th Infantry MVA, Co. B. He was wounded March 14, 1862, at New Bern, North Carolina, and discharged for disability in August 1862.

WILLIAMS, Lucian F. He was the brother of Amos, George and Francis Tyler Williams. He was a farmer when he enlisted, at age eighteen, in Wendell in the 26th Infantry MVA, Co. K. He died from disease in New Orleans in September 1862.

WILLIAMS, Tyler F. Brother of Amos, George and Lucian Williams, he was a painter, age nineteen, when he enlisted in the 10th Infantry, Co. G, on May 18, 1861. He was discharged for disability at Harrisonburg, Virginia, in July 1862.
WINSLOW, Ebenezer. An eighteen-year-old farmer, he was living in Wendell when he enlisted in the 27th Infantry MVA, Co. B, in August 1862. He was wounded on May 16, 1864, at Drury’s Bluff.

WRISLEY, Hollis Smith. Born in 1829 in Gill, he grew up in Wendell. In 1850, Hollis and his brothers Luke and Lockheart (who had only one eye) lived in Orange, next door to Matilda Rice and her two daughters, Luana, twelve, and Lucinda, fifteen. By 1860, Luke had married Lucinda, and they were living in Wendell, as were Lockheart and his wife. Hollis was in Boston, working as a baker. In 1861, at the age of thirty-two, Hollis enlisted as a corporal in the 1st Mass Infantry Regiment, Co. K. In August 1863, he was transferred into the 12th VRC, Co. C, and mustered out in June 1864. Thirteen of his letters to his wife-to-be, Luana, and his brother, Luke, survive (see the beginning of this section). After a long convalescence, Hollis finished out his service in the RVC or Invalid Corps. He was discharged at Alexandria, Virginia, in June 1864, and he married Luana Rice in Vernon, Vermont, that October. Their son, Willie, was born in 1865, and by 1870 Hollis and Luana had a small farm on Morse Village Road in Wendell. On his 1878 application for an invalid’s pension, Hollis identified himself as “a farmer and a butcher, partially disabled” with rheumatism and chronic diarrhea. He received the pension in 1879, but died two years later, at the age of fifty-two. His son, Willie, never married and died at age thirty-two. Luana died in 1895.

WYMAN, Frederick Holden. On the 1850 Wendell census, he was twelve years old and living with his parents, Sophia Philips and shoemaker Luther Wyman, and five siblings on Wickett Pond Road near Ephraim Locke. On the 1860 Wendell census, he was twenty-one and working as a farmer. In June 1861, his brother, Luther F. Wyman of Woburn enlisted; he became a POW, but survived the war. Frederick enlisted in November 1861 in the 27th Infantry MVA, Co. C. He must have come home on leave because, on August 17, 1862, he married Hattie Louisa Stimpson, twenty-nine, of Barre. Either wounded or ill, he was transferred to the VRC, Co. H., in September 1863.
Historian Louis H. Everts names five other soldiers reportedly from Wendell, yet I find no other evidence to support this claim. The five are listed below, but not counted among the approximately sixty Wendell men who went to war.

CAREY, Michael. Enlisted August 12, 1864, Co. L, 1st H. Artillery.

CRANE, Walter D. Enlisted January 4, 1864, 26th Infantry, Co. K, and was discharged August 26, 1865. He married in Orange in 1867 and died in Northfield in 1895.

GREEN, Charles E. Born in Grafton, he was nineteen in 1861 when he enlisted in the 10th Infantry, Co. G. He suffered sunstroke from which he never recovered, was transferred to the VRC, and discharged July 1, 1864.

PIPER, Edwin A. Enlisted April 1, 1864, 28th Infantry, Co. B. He was killed a month later at Spotsylvania, Virginia.

SULLIVAN, John. Enlisted May 31, 1864, 3d U.S. Artillery, Co. A.

The 1890 U. S. Census of Union Veterans and Widows of the Civil War adds seventeen more men living in Wendell that year to the ranks of those who served in and survived the Civil War; their rank, length of service, and nature of their incurred disabilities are also given. Some may have lived in Wendell before the war, but most appear to have moved there after the war. Consequently, they, too, are not counted in the final tally. Where possible, I have contributed supplementary biographical information:

BLAIR, Benjamin R. Private, 1862–1865, acute rheumatism and shell [to the] knee. The three Blair brothers listed above did, in fact, have a brother named Benjamin, but he would have been only eleven years old in 1862, and his middle initial was “A,” not “R.” This man served with a Vermont regiment, probably came to town after the war, and married Charlotte Blair Taylor, sister of the Blair brothers and widow of William Jefferson Taylor who died in the war.

BUZZELL, Eli F. Private, 1864, chronic diarrhea. Mr. Buzzell was a trustee of the New Salem Academy from 1895 to 1903.
COLSON Everett L. Private, 1862–1865, rheumatism.

GRAVES, Enos D. Corporal, 1861. He later owned a home and grocery store in Wendell Depot. There is a photograph of his house on file at the Wendell Library.


HOLSTON, John C. Private, 1862–1865, wounded in right leg, injury to back.

LEONARD, William H. Private, 1861, deafness.

LEWIS, George A. Private, 1862–1863, chronic dysentery and rheumatism.


MAHONEY, Daniel. Private, 1861–1865, wounded in thighs and testicles.

METCALF, William. Seaman on gunboat, 1861–1862.

PLUMB, James M. 57th NY, Co. C, 1826–1899. He served as a Private from 1861 to 1864, suffering a gunshot in his right thigh. He is buried in Wendell’s South Cemetery. He was the father of Nelson Plumb, who served the town of Wendell for many years as town clerk and, late in his life, committed suicide.

STILES, Barrett. Private, 1863–1865, lost his right arm.

SMITH, Erastus C. Private, 1861–1862, general disability.

SCHOULLER, Uschell (Michel). Private. On the 1890 Census of Veterans, this man’s first name appears to begin with a “U,” but it is also possible that the name written is “Mschell.” In other records, the nearest approximation is a “Mitchell” or “Michelle” Schouller who lived in Erving in both 1850 and 1860. This man was French and his given name was “Michel,” and he was born in 1847, which means that he was only in his mid-teens when he enlisted. After the war, he worked as a billiard table maker at the J. E. Stone Company in Wendell Depot.

WHITCOMB, Jonah. Private, 1864–1865, chills and fever.
WRIGHT, Dwight N. He served for four years, one month and twenty days and was “broken by chills and fever, chronic diarrhea.” Born in Montague in 1836, he moved to Wendell sometime between 1870 and 1880. He was the father of Jennie Wright who became involved in a legal case with the Wendell Select Board in 1906 (see her story under “Charles M. Ballou”).

Finally, there were other men who were born and even raised in Wendell, but living in other towns at the time of the war. One such was William H. Sawyer, son of Jabez Sawyer II and grandson of Jemima Sawyer, the 1833 smallpox victim. “In the Civil War, he enlisted in the 21st Mass. Regiment and was in many engagements and suffered many hardships...in one of the campaigns of his regiment in East Tennessee, his company was reduced to seven men and...their only food for ten days was hard-tack and water; at another time later they had nothing but water for four days.” \(^{281}\) In 1864, he was promoted to captain in the 37th Mass. Regiment and he survived the war without incurring any wounds. After the war, he lived in New Salem, Montague, and Littleton, where he was in the grocery business with his brother Asahel.

THE 27th and 52nd REGIMENTS

Edward Pressey gives a brief chronicle of both the 27th and 52nd Massachusetts Regiments in his History of Montague. Because so many Wendell men joined the ranks of these two regiments, the following excerpt from Pressey’s account is worth quoting:

*The 27th Regiment was organized at Springfield September 20, 1861 under Colonel Horace C. Lee. It reached Annapolis, Maryland the 5th of November 1861. It saw battle at Roanoke Island February 7. It was in the battle of New Bern, North Carolina, March 11, 1862; Gum Swamp, May 20, 1863; Arrowfield Church, Virginia, May 9, 1864; and on May 15, Drury’s Bluff where a quarter of its number were captured and taken to Libby Prison. One hundred men of the 27th died in southern prisons...In all, 430 men had been prisoners.*

\(^{281}\) Eugene Bullard, History of New Salem Academy, 1913, 196-197.
The 52nd Regiment was organized in 1862 at Camp Miller in Greenfield under Colonel H.S. Greenleaf. The men were enlisted for nine months. They reached New Orleans November 19. They were employed in the investment of Port Hudson and on strenuous marches scouring the countryside for many leagues up and down the river. They were, at one stretch, twenty-five days in the siege lines before Port Hudson...Of the closing scene at Port Hudson [James K. Hosmer in The Color Guard] wrote: “The clash of the hostile forces here had been tremendous. It was impossible to think of the Northern power except as a terrible fiery tide...I came when the storm was gone, and could see the mark of the sublime impact. The sea had torn its rugged zigzag way through the bosom of the hill and plain, dashed against battlement and cliff, and reared at the bases until it had hollowed out for itself deep, penetrating channels. Everywhere it had scattered its fiery spume. Within the citadel lay siege guns and field-pieces broken and dented by blows mightier than those of trip-hammers; wheels torn to bits; solid oaken beams riven as by lightning; stubborn parapets dashed through almost as a locomotive plow dashes through a snow-drift, – these and the bloody garments of men.\footnote{Pressey, History of Montague, 181-183.}
In his 1874 Historical Discourse, Reverend Beaman noted that the minutes of the first town meeting in 1781 referred to “the existence of a schoolhouse then standing near Mr. Joseph Johnson’s, probably on the spot where the North School now stands.” Using Sawin’s annotated maps, it appears that Reverend Beaman misidentified that spot. Sawin notes that Joseph Johnson’s house (later Luther Baker’s property) stood across from #139 Wendell Depot Road and that it was, in fact, the site of a school house. The North School, referred to by Reverend Beaman, was built later and several hundred yards further north on the opposite side of the street. Holland, despite his reliance on Sawin for Wendell’s history, suggests that no school buildings existed before 1791 and claims that before that year the schools were “taught in shops and dwellings.” In any case, two events occurred in 1791 that paved the way for a major improvement in the schooling of Wendell’s children. The first of these happened at town meeting in May of that year, when it was “voted that the sum of 200 pounds shall be assessed for the purpose of building school houses.” Two committees were chosen for each of the five school districts (North, South, East, West and Center) – one to collect funds and the other to administrate. The second event came in the form of a gift from the estate of Major William Erving (son and heir of John Erving, Esq.) whose will instructed that the Town of Wendell receive both a ministerial lot (lot #28 on Capt. Dwight’s survey) and a school lot (lot #27 on same). “Thinking it of the highest consequence that learning should be preserved, for fear, from the great inattention thereto, that the people might relapse into a state of barbarism,” Major Erving bequeathed to the town 120 acres on both sides of New Salem Road just north of Bullard Road. It will be remembered, however, that only a few years later Ruth Goodale Tyrer’s second husband, Elisha Washburn, negotiated a 987-year lease of that lot from the town; although different family members came to her financial rescue,

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283 Holland, History of Western Massachusetts, 455.
284 Everts, History of the Connecticut Valley, 785.
285 Everts, Ibid.
Ruth was finally forced to relinquish her rights to the property in 1811, at which time the town once again took control of it. The Whetstone School, pictured below, was built on Lot #27 some years later.

When Sawin interviewed “Hemlock” Wilder in the 1840s, his daughter Roxanne was at their meeting, and she added some of her own recollections of Wendell’s early days. Not so much about schools as about the circumstances in which children were raised, Roxanne said:

In Mr. Kilburn’s time [the early 1800s], the children were called together in private homes in remote parts of town of a week day afternoon to recite the Catechism and hear it explained. All could not go to meeting as all had not clothes.

The assumption, of course, is that Roxanne meant good enough clothes. We are left to wonder if the same applied to school attendance. In 1838-9, not long before Sawin’s interview with the Wilders, when Wendell had a population of about 850 people, the number of children between four and sixteen years old was 222, but average school attendance was only 111 children in the summer months and 167 children in the winter months.286 Many, even at that date, were going without schooling, most likely because their parents needed them to help on the farm.

Other data for 1838-9 include the genders of the teachers (eight females and no males in the summer term; four females and four males in the winter term) and their salaries ($13.25 for males, $4.11 for females). The wages paid did not include room and board; some teachers lived with their parents in Wendell, others with their students' families. In 1843, the town spent $395 on education. To give this some context, that same year the town spent $388 on roads and $967 on support of the poor.\textsuperscript{287} By 1852-53, as we have seen, Wendell ranked 281\textsuperscript{st} out of approximately 350 cities and towns in terms of money appropriated per child and 193\textsuperscript{rd} for attendance – supporting Sawin's claim that "a neglect of education" contributed to Wendell's decline.

A second schooling option, for those whose families could afford it, was New Salem Academy, established in 1795 in the neighboring town of New Salem. Many young people from Wendell attended the Academy, although it was rare for any of them to spend more than a few semesters there.\textsuperscript{288} Nearly all of the young Wendell women who taught in the Wendell district schools received some of their education at this Academy. One of the few annual reports of the Wendell School Committee that has come down to us from the nineteenth century shows that during the school year 1858-59 twelve teachers, all young women, were employed by the schools and that nine of these were residents of Wendell. The nine women were:

1. Ellen Stone, twenty-two years old, daughter of Luther and Lucy Stone (see “Luther Stone”), who seems to have been a student at NSA while she was teaching (1859).
2. Jane Drury, twenty-two-year-old daughter of John (or Joel) Drury and Sarah Young. She attended New Salem Academy from 1853 to 1855.
3. Ann E. Holden, twenty years old, daughter of Josiah Bond and Cynthia Thompson Holden of New Salem. She married George Washington Cleveland in 1865 and had seven children. She lived to be ninety years old.

\textsuperscript{287} Annual Town Report, 1843, Wendell, Massachusetts.
\textsuperscript{288} For a list of all the young men and women who attended New Salem Academy, see Eugene Ballard, History of New Salem Academy, Princeton University, 1913, 249-279.

5. Hannah Baker, nineteen years old, daughter of Luther and Hannah Baker (see “Luther Baker”). She died in 1863, at age twenty-four, of dysentery.

6. Maria Antoinette Sawyer, twenty-five-year-old daughter of Sally and Jabez Sawyer II. This was the girl who was born one week after her grandmother, Jemima Sawyer, died of smallpox. She studied at New Salem Academy for eight years (1846–1854) and married Charles Forbes in August 1858, but died only nine years later. She is buried in New Salem.

7. Ellen Leach, daughter of Luke Osgood Leach and 2x-great-granddaughter of Aaron Osgood. Ellen attended New Salem Academy for four years, taught school briefly, and then married Joel Mason Armstrong of Wendell (see his name under “Civil War”) in 1859.

8. Jane Leach, sister of Ellen.

9. R. Maria Packard. No information on this woman can be found.

In 1827, the number of school districts increased to ten and stayed that way for the next fifty years – yet, the 1858 Walling map shows only eight school buildings. The 1871 Beers map shows the full ten school buildings, one for each school district, but by the
time Everts published his history, in 1879, the ten school districts had been reduced to five: Center, North, Mormon Hollow, South, and Southwest. By the last decade of the nineteenth century, the schools had improved to such a degree that the 1892 *Centennial Gazette*, published in Greenfield, reported that the students in Wendell were being taught at a standard “much above the average.” Their number, however, had declined to only eighty.

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MAPS

All the maps reproduced here – with the exception of Sawin’s map of Wendell Center – are courtesy of Dave Allen of www.old-maps.com and Roberge Associates in Greenfield, Massachusetts.

A very early map of Wendell was made by Nathaniel Kellogg and dated June 20, 1743, but – not surprisingly – it is composed of nothing more than an empty pentagon whose outline depicts the unnamed and unsettled 5,719 acres that would become a part of Ervingshire within the next decade. Forty-odd years later, Joseph Metcalf surveyed the same area, giving us the “1788 Map,” which is included in the section about Aaron Osgood.

Then in 1795, a “Plan of the Town of Wendell,” signed and dated by Joshua Green, shows brooks, ponds, the river, and the few roads that existed at that time. The old Shutesbury boundary is a dotted line that runs across the map just north of the meetinghouse. Note that Farley Road does not connect to Wendell Depot Road the way it does today. The east-west road from Montague to New Salem, Morse Village Road, and part of New Salem Road are all evident. The map also shows the road running from the meetinghouse due north to the Millers River (today much of that road exists only as a trail through the woods). What could be mistaken for Wendell Depot Road is actually Osgood Brook and the dark north-south line on the New Salem boundary is Whetstone Brook. At the top of this map is an explanatory note penned by Joshua Green. It reads as follows:

A Plan of the Town of Wendell, That part which was Ervingshire and lies north of the dotted line, is taken from a survey made by Joseph Metcalf, Esq. in 1788 – the rest was surveyed last fall, agreeably to Resolve of Court. The red lines represent the course of County roads. The reputed distance from the shire town [Greenfield?] is 30 Miles, & from the Metropolis [Boston] 90. The Mills are neither of them used, except spring & fall. The whole town being mountainous, there is none particularized.

Nathaniel Kellogg, as we have seen, was the 2nd-great-grandfather of Hannah and Sally Kellogg, two sisters who married two brothers, the sons of Gad Wyeth.
The mills in question were those owned by Luke Osgood at Bowen's Pond and by Amariah Sawyer in the “Smallpox Cemetery” neighborhood.

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1795 “PLAN OF THE TOWN OF WENDELL,” SIGNED BY JOSHUA GREEN and COMMITTEE
Copied and amended by Thomas Sawin, June 25, 1862; later traced by Samuel Dexter. Note the old north line of Shutesbury running horizontally north of Wickett Pond and the old west line of Wendell running vertically west of Wickett Pond. Note also that these lots are numbered in accordance with Capt. Nathaniel Dwight's "Gentlemen's Plan."
Note the cluster of buildings along the road between the Congregational Meetinghouse on the Common and the Baptist Church to the east. Some roads, like the one behind the Baptist Church, no longer exist while more modern roads had not yet been built.
Joshua Green is listed as the occupant of house #79, which helps date this map: Green died in June 1847, and Sawin began his notes in 1843. This map, then, was drawn by Sawin at some time between those two dates.
WENDELL SEGMENT OF 1858 WALLING MAP OF FRANKLIN COUNTY
WENDELL SEGMENT OF 1871 BEERS MAP OF FRANKLIN COUNTY
In his notes, Sawin says that sometime in 1846 he heard that Joshua Green had an “ancient” map of Wendell and went to Green, asking to see it. The Judge, however, had misplaced it. After Green’s death, Sawin asked Green’s son Edward to be on the look-out for the map, and it was found. Sawin was disappointed to discover no date or authorship written on it, but he believed that it dated from sometime after the town’s incorporation in 1781. This was probably the same map that today is identified in Wendell’s map collection as the “1800 Map.” It not only shows and numbers the original lot divisions made by surveyors Captain Nathaniel Dwight and Joseph Metcalf, but also demarcates the “old west line,” making it apparent that the map was created – or, actually, revised – sometime after Wendell’s 1803 annexation of the eastern edge of Montague. In any case, this map is invaluable. Most of the old property conveyances on record use Dwight’s lot numbers to identify the real estate. For example, on December 18, 1770, David Osgood II of Lancaster, Aaron Osgood’s brother, sold to his nephew Luke Osgood of Ervingshire “fourteen acres in the east end of Lot #8 and ten acres in the east end of Lot #9.” Without the 1800 map, it would be much harder to determine where some of these properties were located.

A note at the top of the map states that Sawin added to it the names of non-resident property owners taken from an 1800 Tax List made by Judge Joshua Green. Thus, the names of Erving’s heirs (James Bowdoin, Madam Bowdoin, Duncan Stewart, Sarah Waldo, George Erving, and Lady Temple) appear on many lots above the “old north line of Shutesbury,” while Oliver Wendell and Jonathan Jackson’s names are attached to many lots below that line. Sawin may have also added the “old west line.” According to another note on the map, it “was deposited in the rooms of the Worcester Historical Society at his [Sawin’s] death in the fall of 1873.” The writer of that note, Samuel S. Dexter of Orange, traced the map Sawin updated, and it is his tracing that has come down to us today. (Samuel was the brother of Amasa C. Dexter, who lived at #66 West Street in the mid-1800s, a man Sawin amiably described as “a Methodist, thriving and just.”)

One of the greatest contributions of Sawin’s notes is his painstakingly hand-drawn and detailed maps of all the localities within
the boundaries of Wendell. They show both extant and discontinued roads in the mid-1800s and, for both, a note was made of the year in which they were opened. Sawin’s maps also show the locations of schools, graveyards, shops, and churches, and he marks the places where houses stood – or once stood. Names of builders, dates of construction, and names of current and past occupants are all provided. In every instance, the details in his maps are precise. From bends in a road to locations of “rivulets” to distances between homesteads, Sawin does not err.

Three nineteenth century maps of Franklin County provide vital information. The first of these is the 1844 Borden map, which shows the layout of Wendell’s roads and allows us to see that the configuration of these differed considerably from what exists today. The map, though dated 1844, portrays the roads as they were about a decade earlier – as demonstrated, for example, by the absence on the map of the stretch of Locke’s Village Road running from West Street to its intersection with Locke Hill Road; this long segment of road did not exist before 1837. The man behind the map was Simeon Borden (1798–1856), a largely self-taught inventor, engineer, and surveyor as well as an accomplished metalworker and woodworker. He invented an accurate, although relatively crude, measuring rod, which enabled him to survey the state of Massachusetts, a map known from that time on as Borden’s baseline.  

In 1858, Henry F. Walling (1825–1888) received a commission from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to revise and extend Borden’s survey. His measuring devices, essentially an odometer and a compass, required one man instead of the former three to map a town, and that man made note of topographical features as well as locations of dwellings, mills, churches, schools, and some businesses. In 1858, for the first time, owners’ names were printed next to the squares representing their houses.  

The third important map of Franklin County was made in 1871 by Frederick W. Beers (1839–1933), cartographer, surveyor, and

publisher of county atlases. Between 1865 and 1900, Beers published atlases of sixty counties in ten states and worked as head of the map division of the Brooklyn (New York) Office of Public Records.292 As Walling had done, Beers printed the locations and names of private dwellings and public structures. The Beers map includes a list of businesses in Wendell and depicts the actual shapes of different houses.

Without these maps and the names attached to specific locations on them, the work of uncovering Wendell's past would have been far more difficult, and the relics found at the remains of homesteads belonging to men such as Benjamin Bufford and Ephraim Sawyer would have been meaningless.

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292 www.georgeglazer.com/maps/newyorkmaps/bedford.html
Early town records show that the issue of how to care and provide for the poor was a perennial subject of discussion at town meeting. Piecing together what we can, it appears that the earliest solution was to farm the poor out to townspeople who bid on the cost of their upkeep, the lowest bidder being reimbursed by the town. In this way, for example, Ruth Goodale Tyrer’s two daughters were put up “at vendue” in 1796. The ten-year old was “struck off” to Abner Allen for one shilling a week, and the fifteen-year old went to Dille Whitcomb for two shillings a week. Eight months later, Silas Wilder agreed to take both girls for three shillings per week. Any extraordinary costs, like medical care, were paid by the town. This system apparently was kept in place for many decades. Then, in 1842, “the town purchased a farm and house for the habitation and employment of the paupers,” and we know from Sawin’s Map VII that this “Poor Farm” was located on what is now Laurel Drive, somewhere near its intersection with Jerusalem Road. When Sawin drew his map about 1846, a man named Morrison was the steward of the Poor Farm. Wendell’s overseers of the poor listed nine paupers in Wendell in 1849 – as compared with Erving’s twelve, Gill’s eight, New Salem’s twenty-three, and Warwick’s fourteen.

Wendell’s 1860 census shows five people living at the Poor Farm: Phillip Hammond, sixty-five, and blind; James Austin, eighty-four and blind; Susanna Austin, seventy-seven; Susan Austin, forty, an “idiot;” and Mary Styles, eighty-seven.

The 1870 census and the 1871 Beers map show that by this time the Poor Farm had moved its location to the corner of Wickett Pond Road and Montague Road, taking over the house that had been Samuel Brewer’s homestead for so many decades. In 1870, Nicholas Laux, a thirty-year-old Prussian man, and his Irish-born wife, Mary, ran the almshouse where there were four women in their care: Patty Paine, eighty-eight; Mary J. Mahan, eighty-three;
Elizabeth Rice, sixty-five; and Susan Austin, fifty-two, and labeled “idiotic.”

In 1884, the State Board of Health, Lunacy and Charity rendered the following account of the Wendell almshouse:

[It] was visited August 14 and November 20...[it] is a mile from the village on the road to Montague. At the last visit, there were four inmates, a fifth having died November 15. Three were women, one of whom I. R. [Ida Rice] is insane and occasionally secluded. The superintendent, F. Russell, here since last April, salary $275, and his wife, take excellent care of the inmates, who eat at the same table with them, are well clothed, and have good bedding and furniture, etc., although the rooms are not well arranged. Sanitary conditions are good.\(^{295}\)

The net cost of pauperism in Wendell that year was $858. This report also provides a population figure for the town that year: 465.

Ten years later, in 1890, the Town’s *Annual Report of the Selectmen and the Overseers of the Poor* identified six paupers under the care of the town Poor Farm wardens, Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Plumb. They were Ida Rice (insane), thirty-four; Elizabeth Rice, eighty-five; Otis Root, eighty-six; William Farr, sixty-one; Laura Farr, fifty-eight; and John Wyman, forty-five. Artemas Taylor, seventy-eight, had died on the Farm that year. Additionally, two tramps had been provided for. The State Board’s report for that year noted that Wendell’s almshouse was “a two-story frame building with two small L’s, being very old and out of repair. It is comfortably furnished and the housekeeping is good.”\(^{296}\) It was reported that year also that the Poor Farm had sold eighty-nine dozen eggs and seventy-five pounds of butter at stores.

By 1896, the State Board of Health, Lunacy, and Charity revealed declining conditions at the Wendell Poor Farm:


This almshouse which is a large, old-fashioned farmhouse, has had no change since last year and is fairly clean and orderly. Two insane persons were removed to one of the lunatic hospitals at the request of this Board. The remaining inmates receive indifferent care, and a more efficient management is desirable. A different provision should be made for tramps, who are now lodged in the almshouse. Complaint is made of an insufficient water supply. The location of the well is objectionable, as it is in a position to receive drainage from unwholesome sources. There are two inmates, both old men, one of whom is insane. The warden and matron [unnamed] receive a salary of $300 a year.\textsuperscript{297}

This downturn in care and water quality, however, soon became a moot point. When representatives of the Board made their annual visit to Wendell on September 27, 1897, they discovered that the almshouse – the house built by Samuel Brewer’s father in 1770 – had been destroyed by a fire the previous March and that the one and only inmate had been “placed in a family where he has satisfactory care.”\textsuperscript{298} With the Poor Farm gone and probably no funds available with which to replace it, Wendell’s poor and mentally ill were subsidized by the town individually rather than collectively. From the turn of the century up until 1935 when the Social Security Act was passed, the Overseers of the Poor (the Select Board) decided who was eligible for relief and how much he or she would receive.

The town’s annual reports from those years show payments to certain individuals, for things like firewood and doctor’s visits, and to state institutions for the care of one or two mentally ill citizens.

An interesting note regarding people who were mentally challenged in ways other than “insanity” and how they were cared for relates to the accomplishment of native son, Hervey Backus.


Wilbur, son of Reverend Henry Wilbur, the pastor sent to Wendell to replace Reverend Kilburn in 1817. Hervey Wilbur is often credited with creating one of the first training institutions for the “feeble-minded” in the United States. He left Wendell as a young man, graduated from Amherst College in 1838, taught school, and studied engineering for a while before deciding to pursue a career in medicine. Graduating from Berkshire Medical College in 1842, Wilbur talked the New York legislature into funding an experimental school for the feeble-minded at Albany. This was successful enough to merit its permanent establishment as the “State Asylum for Idiots” at Syracuse with Wilbur at its helm as superintendent until his sudden death at age sixty-three.299

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Along Jennison Road, not far from where it meets New Salem Road, Rufus Sibley farmed, raised a family, and created an extraordinary landscape. Rufus is remembered in family papers and by people who knew his daughter, Susie, as a talented gardener as well as a carpenter and builder whose efforts bore his personal stamp of whimsical creativity. Using Wendell’s perennial crop of fieldstones, Sibley fashioned outdoor furniture – much of it over-sized – in scattered spots all around his property. Then, as now, a walk through the woods near Sibley’s home yielded surprises in the form of stone couches, chairs, and tables. Rufus’s light-hearted touch is seen, too, in a photograph of the fairy-tale-like summer house he built for warm weather gatherings: its walls were crafted out of the twisted limbs of mountain laurel which no doubt served as a support for a variety of vines. Rufus’s great-granddaughter, Judith Lambert, was told that he had been an Episcopal minister when he lived in Connecticut and that throughout his life communing with God was an important part of his devotional practice. For reasons lost to time, Rufus gave the name “Purgatory” to a structure he built across the street from the family’s house – although what it looked like and what it was used for are no longer known. The beauty Sibley created captured the eye of itinerant artist James Franklin Gilman who made two paintings of the Sibley farm (he also painted the Fiske farm, pictured under “Fiske Family”), but it has not yet been possible to track them down.

Rufus L. Sibley was born about 1842 in Millbury, Massachusetts, and he married Sarah Raymond of Wendell. (She may have been related to Charles Raymond; see his name under “Miscellanea.”) They married later than most couples and spent their first decade together in Thompson, Connecticut, where Ida May was born in 1873, Susan in 1878, and Jeremiah in 1880. In the 1880s, the family moved to Wendell. With Sarah approaching fifty years old, there were no more children, but she and Rufus built a life
for their family at what they christened “Rustic Valley Farm,” their Wendell home for more than three decades.

The absence of Rufus’s name in the town records suggests that his focus lay primarily on his home life, although in 1907, at age sixty-six, he was Wendell’s tree warden. Five years later, he died of angina pectoris and acute indigestion. Sarah, his wife, lived on for another ten years, dying of “senile dementia” at age eighty-one. Although Sibley’s once fantastic “Rustic Valley Farm” is carefully tended today, the only remains of his creations are an overgrown cellar hole, traces of the hundred-foot-long terraces that held his rose bushes against the hill behind the house, and some examples of his unique stone furniture.

Rufus and Sarah’s daughter Ida May died in 1899 and their daughter, Susie, married Charles H. Bean. Their daughter was Eleanor Bean who married police chief Rupert Goddard, a man remembered by some in town today. (He is quoted in the “Smallpox Cemetery” section.) Charles Bean went to Arizona for a time in the early 1900s to become a cowboy, but when that venture didn’t work out very well for him he returned to Wendell. Jeremiah married Ella Allen of Wendell in 1908. She worked at the tapioca factory in Orange, but died at thirty-five years of age in 1921. Jeremiah married again and lived for another forty years. Then, one winter’s day, he sat down in his rocking chair, closed his eyes, and quietly passed away.

Summer house built of mountain laurel branches by Rufus Sibley at his property on Jennison Road. Photograph courtesy of Judith Lambert, Sibley descendant.

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A “coincidental” story: in 1973, fifty years after Sarah Sibley’s death, Dave and Bette Richard bought the land adjacent to the old Sibley property in Wendell. Soon afterwards, knowing nothing of Sibley, they struck upon the idea of calling their place “Rustic Retreat Farm.” It wasn’t until many years later – in a conversation with a Mr. Ward Hunting of New Salem – that Bette learned that the Sibleys had named their homestead “Rustic Valley Farm.” Today, the Richards own not only Rustic Retreat Farm, but also portions of Rustic Valley Farm (including Sibley’s house and barn sites), and both are under a Franklin Land Trust conservation restriction.

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The story of Wendell up to 1900 cannot close without mention of Charles Martin Ballou, a man whose influence pervaded Wendell’s town government well into the twentieth century. By trade, Mr. Ballou was a farmer and a horse dealer, but he held so many political offices – often simultaneously – that he sometimes seems to have run the town single-handedly. Indeed, this appears to have been his own perception as well.

Charles’s grandfather, Francis Ballou, was a French-Canadian immigrant who, with his wife, Charlotte Cook, settled in Stafford Springs, Connecticut. There, they had two boys, John in 1839 and Stephen in 1847. Francis and his sons came to Wendell in 1865 and, one year later, Stephen married Josephine Maria Beach, born in Wendell in 1846, who gave birth to their son, Charles Martin Ballou, in 1867. (Charles was followed by two more children: William Herbert Ballou in 1869 and Anna E. Ballou in 1872.) Stephen died at forty-two years of age while Josephine lived to be eighty-six.

Charles was raised on his father’s farm on Wendell Depot Road (where now only a silo is left standing) and was educated in the district school just down the road. When his father died in 1889, Charles inherited the fifty-acre farm, and in 1890, at age twenty-three, he married Laura Brown of Connecticut. Their only child, Frank Emmons Ballou, was born a year later. A hard worker, Charles “occupied himself in bringing his land into a high state of cultivation...and [was] classed among the most enterprising and prosperous agriculturists of Wendell.” During the closing decade of the century, he became involved in town politics, serving as constable and assessor from 1896 to 1899. In about 1903, he was elected to the Select Board – a position he held for the next forty years – and soon became embroiled in a legal case, some of whose circumstances foreshadowed another one nearly three decades later.

301 Biographical Review, 1895, 98.
The first case involved a Miss Jennie Wright, born at Wendell Depot in 1880. In 1905, she and her two-year-old son were being supported by the Town of Wendell under the aegis of the three men who made up its Select Board and Overseers of the Poor: George Fleming, Andrew Baker, and Charles Ballou. Having been informed that Jennie, although single, was pregnant by a certain Burnside Davis, a machinist living in Erving, the three men worried that the Town of Wendell would soon need to support a second child of hers. Seeking to avert this situation, the men set out with a constable on December 11 for the Millers Falls Company where Mr. Davis was employed. There, they threatened Davis with jail time if he did not marry Miss Wright and denied him permission to visit legal counsel in Greenfield. They then took Davis to the Wendell Town Clerk, Nelson Plumb, who right then and there performed a marriage ceremony between Davis and Wright. Seven months later, Davis, who claimed never to have lived with Wright after the “marriage,” took the case to court. A Springfield Republican article reporting on the Superior Court hearing in Greenfield stated that the presiding judge declared the marriage null and void and criticized the action of the Wendell Overseers of the Poor.\textsuperscript{302}

Despite such antics, Ballou was an exceedingly popular man and often ran unopposed. A second and more notorious event ended with the entire Wendell Select Board landing in the Greenfield jail. The following story, taken from a full-page article in the August 6, 1933 edition of the Boston Globe, illustrates Ballou’s popularity as well as his power – both real and imagined. At the time, the Wendell selectmen were Charles Ballou (chairman), Charles Jennison, and Lewis Bowen, all about seventy years of age. While most of the town supported Ballou and “his crowd,” there was a decided opposing element headed up by Ozro Baker, grandson of both Luther Baker and Luther Stone. Baker, like Ballou, had served in many town offices over the years. The rivalry between the Baker and Ballou camps was so pronounced that for several years each group sat on opposite sides of a
stovepipe that ran down the middle of Town Hall. State police were called in for a 1930 Special Town Meeting and again for the regular town meetings in 1931 and 1932 because the potential for explosive outbursts was so high. In 1931, having lost the Select Board seat he was running for, Baker asked for a recount and challenged the right of some people to vote, claiming they were not residents of the town. In 1932, Ballou, Jennison, and Bowen, acting in their capacity as registrars, turned the tables and struck Ozro Baker from the voting list for reason of non-residency. In fact, Baker and his family were living in Millers Falls, but he maintained Wendell as his legal residence. Outraged by what he deemed an effort to remove him from Wendell politics, Baker took the three men to court. In April 1932, all three selectmen were found guilty of violation of election laws, and the judge sentenced them to six months in jail. The defendants appealed to the Massachusetts Supreme Court, which in June 1933 upheld the lower court’s decision. Their sentence, though, was reduced to three months, commencing in July. Then, in August, after serving only three weeks in the Greenfield House of Correction, they received a pardon from the Governor, and many participated in turning their homecoming into a festive, celebratory affair.

Family History of Jennie Wright

Jennie’s father, Dwight Wright, was a Civil War veteran, and at the end of his life he, like Jennie, was on Wendell’s poor rolls. When he was a young man and living in Montague with his parents, his father, Hibbard Wright, was killed in a gruesome railway accident. The November 24, 1853 Springfield Republican story reads as follows:

As the evening train from Boston, which was an hour or two late, was approaching Greenfield on Tuesday evening about 6 o’clock, while between the bridges across the Deerfield and Connecticut Rivers, the engine was thrown from the track by running over the bodies of Hibbard Wright and Otis Field of Montague who appear to have been sleeping on the track. Wright was instantly killed, his head being severed from his body and Field now lies in a critical condition, and is not expected to recover. His legs were horribly mangled, and have been amputated by Dr. James Deane of Greenfield.

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303 Wendell Post, August-September, 1986, 5.
Ballou remained on the Select Board for many more years after this event, and his son, Frank, held a variety of other positions in town. Charles Ballou died in Wendell at the age of seventy-nine on March 1, 1946.

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TIME-TRAVELING

In the spring of 2012, I received a phone call from Paul Wawrzonek, a semi-retired aerospace engineer and metal-detecting aficionado from Palmer, Massachusetts, who wondered if the Wendell Historical Society would be interested in the many objects he had dug up in Wendell over the last decade. We met at the Wendell Library where he showed me Ziploc bags full of antique buttons, musket balls, cutlery, buckles, sleigh and animal bells, coins, horse shoes, and more. The bags were neatly labeled with dates and places, documenting where the objects had been found. One of his most remarkable discoveries was a small combination compass/sundial whose cover contains a tiny hand-drawn and hand-colored celestial map. These compass-sundials were carried by travelers for centuries to determine direction and approximate time of day, and a duplicate of this one, owned by Paul Revere, is on display at the Boston Public Library. I was fascinated by this trove of treasures and touched by Paul's wish to give it to the town. On behalf of the Historical Society, I gladly accepted it all.\[304\]

Metal-detecting as a hobby, or even as an activity, had never occurred to me, but seeing those objects that had been buried underground for nearly two centuries triggered an immediate and intense enthusiasm in me, and soon I was accompanying Paul on his relic-hunting forays. Using the old maps of the town, we explored cellar holes, former pasture land, and—with permission—the grounds around some of the oldest houses. In some instances, property owners directed us to remote house sites that do not appear on any maps, a condition that protected them from the ransacking to which most cellar holes in town have been subjected.

But on a hot July day in 2014, after several seasons of metal detecting, Paul and I were both feeling discouraged, skeptical of the existence of any other “virgin” sites that might be accessible to us. We had just spent a steamy, buggy morning searching around

\[304\] All these items are now kept under lock and key. They are periodically displayed in the Library and at Old Home Day.
the cellar holes in the old settlement above Luther Stone’s saw-mill, only to find that other relic-hunters had already thoroughly combed the area. The ground was littered with open dig-holes and even rejected finds, such as the rusty remains of antique farm tools. I was beginning to think we had arrived at a dead end.

Then I remembered something I had seen on one of Sawin’s maps: a site on Farley Road where I knew there was nothing—no cellar hole, no stone walls, and no daylilies or lilacs to indicate that someone may have once lived there. Just forest. And yet, Sawin’s map clearly stated that in 1809 an Edmund Fay had built a log cabin at that place. With a glimmer of hope in our hearts, we drove to the site, slathered on more mosquito-repellant, and walked into the woods. It didn’t look promising. The uneven and hilly boulder-strewn land would have been all but impossible to farm, and when the detector’s beeping led us to unearth some old Budweiser cans, my spirits slumped again. But then I heard Paul say “whoops”—his code word for “hmm, here’s something interesting”—and there he was on his hands and knees digging, checking with the detector, and digging again. It’s always a good sign when he has to dig deeper than six inches because it means that whatever is down there has been down there for a good long while. “A-ha!” he said, holding up a three-inch long, square-headed, rusty nail. That was impetus enough for us to keep searching. Next we found an ox-shoe (unlike a horse, an ox’s hoof is divided down the middle, so its shoe is made in two parts, one for each side), then a trail of smaller nails, all in a row, indicating that they had been pounded into a board for a door, say, or a shelf. Then came a table knife and another ox-shoe. We didn’t find a well, but Sawin’s map indicated a “rivulet” to the east of the cabin site. Coming upon it, the metal detector beeped insistently as Paul scanned it across the water in the little creek. Again, he started digging. There, buried in the mud, he found a short, broken tree branch in which a musket ball was lodged. At least a century and a half of lying beneath the dirt and water had preserved the wood and kept it from releasing the musket ball. We sat down on a nearby log and took stock of our finds. Mr. Fay, it seemed to us, was not a farmer, but a logger. He must have used an ox, or a pair of oxen, to pull logs out of the woods, and it
would have been a very short distance from his land to Crosby's sawmill next door. The table knife suggested that Edmund Fay may have lived at the site, and the absence of both a cellar hole and the usual scattering of old nails supported Sawin's claim that his home had been a log cabin. Was it Edmund who had taken a shot at an animal drinking down by the creek and missed, the bullet lodging in a tree instead of the animal's flesh? Silence fell between us as we traveled two hundred years back in time, reconstructing that day and that moment in our minds' eye.

Back at home, I switched on the computer to see what I could find about such an ordinary man. Edmund Fay was born in 1778 in Southborough, Massachusetts, where in 1801 he married Levinia Harrington. Soon after their marriage they came to Wendell, and in 1803 they bought Lot #1, a 114½-acre tract adjacent to Jonathan Crosby's homestead and mills, from Edmund's brother Nathan who had come to Wendell before Edmund. (Nathan had purchased Lot #1 from George William Erving, son of John Erving and resident of London, for $496 in 1796.305) In 1803 also, Edmund and Levinia lost their first child, a boy. They had three more children in Wendell: William in 1805, Lydia in 1807, and Nathan in 1812. Levinia then died, and Edmund may have hit hard times because, at an 1812 town meeting, the "three children of Mrs. Fay [were] set up as paupers and taken ["at vendue"] at 31, 29 and 43 cents per week respectively" (see "Early Questions and Decisions"). It is possible, however, that "Mrs. Fay" was not Edmund's but Nathan's wife, Nathan having left Wendell several years earlier. In any event, a few years later Edmund returned with his children to Southborough, where he remarried in 1817. He and his second wife named their baby girl Levinia, in honor of Edmund's first wife. Little else is found, yet even this information fuels the imagination.

Turning again to Sawin's notes, he says that prior to putting up his log cabin on Farley Road in 1809, Edmund Fay had built two houses in the same neighborhood: one on the opposite side of Farley Road a couple hundred yards to the east and one up on nearby Bear Mountain. Both houses had stone foundations which are there today. Paul and I searched around them a few years ago,
but came up with nothing. Sitting as close to the road as they do, they have surely not gone unnoticed by other relic-hunters.

Given the amount of work involved in clearing land, milling lumber, and building a house, why would a man have built three houses in the space of only fifteen years? It’s another unanswerable question, but Sawin provides a clue: Fay’s closest neighbor on Bear Mountain, Joseph Williams, left his home there and moved into the house with the stone foundation that Fay built on Farley Road. Perhaps Fay was an early real estate developer, building houses with the trees he logged and turned into lumber. For now, that story will have to do.

Genealogical Note:
Nathan Fay went west and died in New York state in 1810 at age thirty-eight. Edmund Fay died in Southborough in 1827 at age forty-eight. Samuel Brewer’s daughter Martha (1811–1897) married a Benjamin Fay in Wendell in 1833; Benjamin’s relationship, if any, to Edmund Fay is unknown.

***
According to legend, the origin of the name “Millers River” which was formerly known by its Native name, Pequoiag, is this:

...a young swain was paddling down the river in his canoe to meet his sweetheart at a prearranged spot. Where she came from is not recorded, but she evidently came from some distance because she had an Indian guide with her.

It was in the spring of the year. The ice had already broken away and the river...came roaring down through the cataracts. When he hove in sight, she marveled at his ability in handling the canoe over the turbulent waters between jagged rocks and floating ice cakes.

For a moment he lifted his eyes from the water to hail the girl of his choice. Then it happened. The bow of his fast-moving canoe struck an ice floe and hurled him into the frigid water. The girl stood horrified and helpless on the shore. Minutes seemed like eternities. The body of her lover was evidently swept downstream in the wild current for it was never seen again. The boy’s name was Miller, and from that day on, the river on which the disaster occurred has carried his name.\(^\text{306}\)

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**WENDELL GIVES AID**

for Fire Victims in Boston

1794: Received of the Selectmen of the Town of Wendell by the hand of Joshua Green $7.81 for the relief of the sufferers of the fire in Boston of July 30, 1794.\(^\text{307}\)

At four in the morning on July 30, 1794, a huge fire started in the Ropewalk District of Boston, a marshy area bordered today by Milk, Pearl, Purchase, and Congress Streets. A “ropewalk” was a long, narrow shed where rope was woven by hand. A certain


\(^{307}\) From Sawin’s notes.
Mr. Howe was heating up some tar, when he accidentally spilled some of it onto the highly flammable rope-weaving material. The fire spread rapidly and was stopped only by the edge of the sea. Damage was great.  

EARLY INSTANCE OF TRAVELING AFAR FOR WORK

In 1800, a group of men, including one named Leland Champney, went from Wendell to Georgia to cut timber. Finding work as a mill tender, Champney gave it one winter and then returned home. In 1803, he built a house and shop at Wendell Depot opposite the current post-office, and in 1805 he tended Clark Stone's sawmill a little to the west on the Millers River. Nothing more is given of his life story other than Sawin's cryptic explanation of the cause of his death: he was "probably poisoned" about 1850 and, because he was a pauper, he "was buried in his common clothes."

MEANS OF TRAVEL and BRIDGES

1. Joseph Fiske II, in speaking of his grandmother, Sarah Kendall Fiske, told Sawin that "She was a notable woman as many were who came into the wilds; she once rode horseback to Waltham with a child to visit her relations." Sarah was the sister of Jabez Kendall, wife of Daniel Fiske [1730–1799], and great-aunt of Thomas Sawin.

2. Also from Fiske's recollections is this: In the early days of the town, "bareback was the mode of journeying. People even forded Millers River or swam it before the bridge was built at Erving's Grant. Women even went alone in that manner to the lower towns."

3. In a Lake Pleasant Meeting Guide for 1876, found online, times and stops on the Fitchburg Rail Road show that the train trip from Boston to Wendell, in this year, took about four hours. One could leave Boston at 6AM and arrive at Wendell Depot at 11:01AM.

http://www.celebrateboston.com/disasters/ropewalk
4. When J. E. Stone established his piano-leg and case factory on the Millers River in the mid-nineteenth century, the property included land on both sides of the river. In 1859, both Wendell and Erving contributed to the cost of building a 141-foot-long covered bridge between the two sides at what had come to be called Stoneville. If that bridge survived as late as 1938, then the infamous hurricane of that year no doubt took it out.

The extant “rare iron truss bridge” connecting Farley with the base of Bear Mountain was built in 1889 by the New York firm of Dean and Westbrook.

A third bridge fording the Millers River is at Wendell Depot and was built in the early twenty-first century. It replaced one built about a century earlier which, in turn, was a replacement of an older, more graceful stone bridge. The date of that bridge’s construction has not been ascertained. Photographs of the stone bridge are at the Wendell Library.

JAILED FOR NON-PAYMENT OF TAXES

A March 1813 record of town business, found by Sawin, stated: “Gideon Tenney prays the Selectmen to release him from jail and promises to pay his taxes. He pleads that his family are suffering and that the town will soon be burdened by them if he is not released.”

Five months later, in the August 3, 1813 issue of the Franklin Herald, a notice appeared for a property to be sold at public vendue; it describes the place as “being the farm on which Gideon Tenney lately lived,” about two miles northwest of the meetinghouse.

PROPERTY FOR SALE

From the *Franklin Herald* of April 3, 1813:

FOR SALE:

A small farm situated in the town of Wendell nearly one mile and a half west of the meetinghouse, containing thirty acres of good land, well proportioned for mowing, pasturing and tillage; is well watered in every part of it; has convenient buildings thereon almost new, and is an advantageous situation for a mechanic of almost any brand. (Terms made easy for the purchaser). For further particulars, apply to Elihu Beaman.

Elihu Beaman, as reported by Sawin, was a carpenter and his father, Lemuel, had been an early pioneer in Wendell. Sawin’s Map VII locates Elihu’s property at what is today #146 Montague Road.

NAME CHANGE: DEATH TO DAVIS AND DIRTH

Benjamin Death (1751–1821) and Huldah Edson (1755–1813) had eight children in Wendell, all of whom, of course, had the last name of Death. One of these, Oliver, was apparently troubled enough by the family name that he took it upon himself to have it legally changed, hence the following:

From Acts and Resolves Passed by the General Court, 1846:

> Oliver Death of Wendell may take the name of Oliver Davis; Sally Death [his wife] of Wendell may take the name of Sally Davis; also their children, viz: William S., Eliza, Oliver, Mary E., Benjamin, Royal Francis, Hannah Jane, Sarah Ann, Eliza Sophronia may severally take the surname of Davis.  

Why Oliver chose “Davis” is unknown. The family lived on Farley Road and their old cellar hole is still visible about a quarter of a mile east of the fork with Mormon Hollow Road on the south side of the street.

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310 Persons Whose Names Have Been Changed in Massachusetts, 1893, (page number missing from my notes).
As seen in the Locke family “Genealogical Note,” Oliver (Death) Davis’s brother Abel married Nancy Cutting and their last child was Samuel Cutting Death. Disturbed no doubt by that name, Samuel changed his surname to “Dirth” before the birth of his children; hence, his son was Almon Dirth, who lived on what we now call Dirth Road.

When Huldah Edson Death died, Benjamin Death married Patience Boynton Potter (1751–1849). Note that with Benjamin’s marriage to Patience, she became “Patience Death.” Appropriately, she lived to the age of ninety-seven years, nine months, and fifteen days.

A SNAKE STORY

The August 18, 1860 edition of the Greensboro Times in Greensboro, North Carolina, printed this story on page seven:

A mammoth snake has terrified the good people of Wendell, Massachusetts, to an indefinite extent. The person who first saw it says that when his vision fell upon it, it was standing with its head raised from the ground at least six feet; that his snakeship [sic] was at least eighteen feet long, and nearly as large round as a man’s body. Its appearance was so formidable that he was afraid to attack it, and when it crawled away its head was raised at least three feet from the ground. Others have seen the ugly thing, and given chase with guns and dogs.311

311 www.newspapers.com/newspage/66260043
LIQUOR

1. Sawin, again quoting Joseph Fiske II, recounted the following event that took place sometime before James Tyrer’s death in 1793:

There were giants in those days, one might venture to say. Tyrer of the Gad Wyeth place had a cross-cut saw with Upton, his neighbor. It was borrowed by Deacon Osgood who, when he returned it, remarked it was a poor thing. “It’s a good one, though,” [said] Ben Upton,” and I can saw timber enough for 600 shingles in a half day.” “Pooh, can’t.” “Will you bet anything?” “Yes, one gallon of rum.” Well! The day was set, hands came on to split and put up as fast as sawed. The work was done, the rum won. Now we must have a time to drink it. It was carried abroad and the tavern hall [was] the place of carousal. Silas Wilder, Sr., a tall, sly fellow, slipped a bundle of powder with slow match into Tyrer’s pocket. While stooping over, it exploded and threw him against the ceiling with stunning force. All were alarmed. When he recovered, he exclaimed, “What a mercy it was! If it hadn’t been for the plastering, it would have knocked me into the eternal world!”

2. A miscellaneous expense in the 1861 Annual Report of the Wendell Selectmen shows $71.99 paid to W. Putnam for “liquor.” No further explanation is given, but this was twice the amount the town paid that year for a survey of the town. William Putnam ran a general store at Wendell Depot between 1840 and 1886. A synopsis of some of his account books, written by the staff at the UMass Archives, reads, partially, as follows:

Serving an area that remains rural to the present day, [William] Putnam dealt in a range of essential merchandise, trading in lumber and shingles, palm leaf, molasses and sugar, tea, tobacco, quills, dishes, cloth and ribbon, dried fish, crackers and candy. At various times, he was authorized by the town Selectmen to sell “intoxicating liquors” (brandy, whiskey and rum) for “medicinal, chemical and mechanical purposes only” and, for a period, he served as postmaster for Wendell Depot...[His papers] provide relatively slender documentation of Putnam’s litigiousness, his
financial difficulties after the Civil War, and the efforts of his son, John, to continue the business.\footnote{William Putnam Account Books and Receipts, 1840–1848, MS 14, Special Collections and Archives, W.E.B. DuBois Library, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.}

I found nothing to illustrate Putnam’s tendency to sue, but Sawin clipped a newspaper item showing that Putnam — on at least one occasion — abused his license to sell liquor. The \textit{Springfield Republican} of February 22, 1862, printed this:

\begin{quote}
Captain William Putnam of Wendell Depot has just completed his imprisonment of three months for liquor selling, besides paying a fine and costs of $155. Harsh, but merited treatment.
\end{quote}

Sawin added his own commentary, describing Putnam as “an old offender, having made the town infamous by his corruption.”

\section*{NO SUCH THING AS A “FREE LUNCH”}

The 1858 map shows a “C. Raymond” living on the now defunct Northfield Road off of Wendell Depot Road. Even today, this is an impressive site, containing many old stone walls, a sizeable and intact cellar hole with a center chimney, a well, and a large stone slab with a circular indentation and a run-off spout, perhaps for making lye. A well-constructed stone dam lies a short distance from the house site.

Charles Raymond was born in July 1796 in Winchendon, New Hampshire, and he married Charlotte Moors there in January 1819. They lived in Rindge, New Hampshire, for a while before coming to Wendell. Their first appearance in the town’s records is in 1850, when six people were living at the Raymond homestead:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Charles Raymond, 52, farmer, head of household
  \item Charlotte Raymond, 50, wife
  \item Sarah Maria Raymond, 11, daughter (she died four years later of “fever”)
  \item Charles W. Raymond, 29, son, laborer
  \item Sarah Raymond, 20, wife
  \item Sophia A. Raymond, 5, daughter
\end{itemize}
In 1855, Charles Raymond sold his estate to his son, Charles — with some very specific instructions. The deed, unusual in its stipulations, conveys:

a certain farm upon which I now dwell being the same farm deeded to me and the said Charles W. by John Howe of Wendell...and all the buildings and appurtenances thereto belonging. The condition of this deed is as follows:

viz, the said Charles W. is to pay all the debts now outstanding against me and is to bring in and furnish me with one-third the proceeds of the said farm during my lifetime; the farm is to be well cultivated and one-third of all the crops he is to furnish me, and in case of my decease before my wife, said Charles W. is to furnish a good and comfortable maintenance and support for his mother, Charlotte M., during her lifetime. Also furnish her with a horse and carriage to go to meeting and to visit her friends whenever she desires it or to pay to her the sum of $50 annually during her lifetime to be left optional with her which she will take and if at any time after my death she should prefer the $50 a year to her support with the said Charles W., she has the privilege of taking it and supporting herself. The said Charles W. is also to furnish me with a horse and carriage during my lifetime to use whenever I may choose.”

Two years later, the elder Charles was dead and his son, presumably, had set about adhering to his father’s will.

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CONCLUSION

In 1750, by Sawin's account, Wendell was a wilderness visited from time to time by Native Americans and maple tree tappers from villages in the valley below. A mere sixty-five years later, it had become a thriving town of one thousand white men, women and children – a town whose land had been commodified and whose landscape had been vastly altered by farms, roads, and water-powered mills. What no one knew at the time was that 1815 would mark the peak of Wendell's population and prosperity. After that, the number of people fluctuated between 850 and 950 until the early 1850s, when there was a precipitous drop, followed by a century-long downwards slide. By 1960, the population stood at an all-time low of 292 people.\(^\text{314}\)

Wendell's story began with high hopes and much industry which, ironically, became contributing factors in its near-death: the zeal with which Wendell's settlers extracted everything they could from the land quickly rendered it too impoverished to support them, and this became one of the catalysts for exodus. Other catalysts, as we have seen, were the advent of the railroad, government incentives to push further west, the economics of a competitive market, and the impossibility of subdividing family farms into enough acreage for all heirs. Perhaps the biggest drain on the vitality of the town was the Civil War.

Despite all these, though, Wendell did not die. It lay low, waiting. Yet even in its hundred-year dormancy, there were signs of vigor. Charles Ballou, for all his shenanigans, led and energized the town, and new settlers, like Rufus Sibley and later Al Diemand and Arthur Lewis, came and – in creating new lives for themselves – gave new life to the town. The people of Wendell kept the home fires burning. Then, with the back-to-the-land movement in the 1960s, Wendell revived. The population grew to 405 in 1970, to the 700-mark in 1980,\(^\text{315}\) and it continued to rise from


\(^{315}\) Ibid.
there. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of people in town dropped from 986 to 848. Now, at this writing, there appears to be another influx of newcomers, many of whom are young and starting families.

Ebb and flow, rise and fall, dormancy and growth: this is the natural order of life. In the plant world, the cycle of growth and dormancy occurs only if a plant’s roots are alive and firmly embedded in the earth. In a certain way, the same can be said of individuals, families, and communities. Knowing about the people who came here before us not only grounds us and helps answer the question “who are we?” but also colors and enriches our lives. If we think of a community as a tree, maybe even a “family tree,” with a strong, supportive trunk, far-reaching branches, and a protective canopy, then the lives of its past inhabitants compose the tree’s roots. The stories and legacies of this place and these people carry a kind of cultural gene which will no doubt continue to shape and inform succeeding generations in Wendell.

With the printing of this book, Thomas Sawin’s hopes have been fulfilled and my mission is accomplished. Yet, we leave missing pieces. I am confident, however, that—just as Sawin and I did in our own times—someone in the future will crop up to carry on the unearthing of Wendell’s evolution.

***
APPENDIX I

Text of Deed Transferring “Wendell” from Province of Massachusetts Bay to John Erving, Esq.

from Hampshire Abstracts, Book 1, 1663–1786, at the Franklin County Registry of Deeds, Greenfield, Massachusetts

On December 28, 1752, Samuel Watts, John Chandler and Chambers Russell, a committee of the Great and General Court received from John Erving of Boston five hundred twenty-four pounds, four shillings and ten pence for:

all that certain tract of land scituate lying and being in the County of Hampshire in the province aforesaid containing five thousand seven hundred nineteen acres, and is bounded north by Millers River so-called, south by Roadtown, east by New Salem grant, west partly by Sunderland and partly by land belonging to said province, and begins at a Pillar of Stones at the southeast corner and from thence it runs north ten degrees east by Salem Grant nine hundred forty-eight rods to a hemlock tree on said Millers River, and from thence down angling by the River three miles and three-quarters of a mile to a Pillar of Stones at the northwest corner and from thence runs south fourteen degrees, west nine hundred eighty-five rods to a Pillar of Stones at the southwest corner and from thence runs east sixteen degrees south one thousand one hundred twenty-five rods to the place where it first began, together with one hundred ninety-seven acres allowed for Sagg of Chain.

* * *

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### APPENDIX II

*(Partial) Valuation List of 1783*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inhabitants of the Town</th>
<th>Real Estate $ Value</th>
<th>Personal $ Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Ballard</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathan Brewer</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Crosbee</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zachariah Drury</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaron Fisher</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebenezer Fisk</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebenezer Locke</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieut. Richard Moore**</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>123</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lieut. Luke Osgood</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan Osgood</td>
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<td>93</td>
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<tr>
<td>Josiah Osgood</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Benjamin Stiles</td>
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<td>49</td>
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<td>Captain Henry Sweetsir</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abraham Stone</td>
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<td>James Tyrer</td>
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<td>Aholiab Wilder</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bezaliel Wilder I***</td>
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<td>--</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bezaliel Wilder II</td>
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<td>96</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oliver Wetherbee</td>
<td>232</td>
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<td>John Wetherbee</td>
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</table>

**Non-residents of town**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan Jackson</td>
<td>1814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver Wendell, Esq.</td>
<td>512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Erving, Esq.</td>
<td>4707</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The complete list was found, with other town records, written in an old ledger in the Town Vault, Wendell, Massachusetts.

**Lt. Richard Moore married Mercy Eddy in 1761, and they came to Ervingshire from Oxford, Massachusetts that same year. He was a member of the New Salem Church. They lived in Wendell for at least two decades and may have had as many as nine children, but I have found no other information on Richard and Mercy.

***This list was made eight years before Bezaliel Wilder I's death; he may have already given the bulk of his land and personal assets to his children.

** **
Levi and Lewis Stone provided a wide range of services to the people of Wendell in the first half of the nineteenth century. They kept detailed account books in which they recorded services rendered on one side of the page and form of payment (cash or barter) on the other. If a barter were arranged, then a cash value was assigned to the goods and services of both parties. These records give us an insight into life at that time and they validate Sawin’s identification of the occupations of many of Wendell’s residents.

Take, for example, hat-maker George Geary. He received from the Stones the following: a washboard, a bureau, a table, veal, mending a washing machine, hat boxes, a steam box, and making and altering hat blocks. To pay for these services, Geary gave the Stones a fur hat, nails, boards, wine, turpentine, molasses, salt, butter, tallow, sugar, tea, and tobacco.

Printer John Metcalf was a good customer of the Stones. They provided him with such things as a handle for the printing press, a trough to wet paper in, grinding an iron for trimming books, a vice with two screws, two boxes for books, a coffin for his child, a coffin for his father, a looking glass frame, and making a bonnet for his mother. In return, Metcalf gave the Stones an atlas, an English reader, paper and ink powder, half a ream of paper, a dictionary, sugar and tea, twenty-five pounds of veal, Bibles, and a Psalm book.

At the end of Reverend William Claggett’s seven-year stint as pastor of the Congregational Church, the Stones provided him with a room to live in. He was charged $11 for eleven weeks of board for himself and $8 for four weeks of board for himself and his wife. He paid in cash.

Clark Stone, who owned a mill at Wendell Depot and a house on the Wendell Common, paid the Stones with hundreds of feet
of boards, lath boards, shingles, a bushel of turnips, leather for bootees, harness leather, lime, work planting potatoes, and half of the journey of a wagon to Boston in exchange for the repair of a desk, a set of bench tools, setting sixty lights of glass, making two outside doors, cart wheels, tables and bedsteads, and two-and-a-half days of work enclosing a well house.

The Stones were meticulous, if not compulsive, account keepers. The details of a trip made by one of them to Saratoga, New York, resulted in the following (all spelling theirs):

* * *

**APPENDIX IV**

**More Wendell History**

In 2015, I started a blog to which I contribute additional Wendell history as relevant documents are donated to the town and as descendants of old Wendell families contact me. Input from readers is welcome. The blog can be accessed at www.wendellmahistory.wordpress.com.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

I have culled the following titles of books, manuscripts, and articles from my more than three hundred footnotes because I found them to be of special interest.


Centennial Celebration of the Congregational Church, Wendell, Massachusetts, Amherst: Henry McCloud, 1875. Available at the Wendell Library.


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Sawin, Thomas E. *Summary Notes Concerning John Sawin and His Posterity.* Athol Depot: Rufus Putnam, Printer, 1867.


***
Pam Richardson has worked as a waitress, a secretary, a garden designer, a French teacher, and a psychotherapist. These days, she spends her time pursuing her passion for local history, genealogy, and gardening. She lives with her husband deep in the woods of Wendell, Massachusetts.

Thomas Sawin, born two centuries ago, was a farmer, a genealogist, a printer, and a secretary of Wendell’s Baptist church for many years. He compiled extensive notes for a history of Wendell about which he said the people of Wendell were “too few, too poor and too illiterate to ever pay for publication.”

Unlike most other Massachusetts towns, Wendell has not – until now – had a written history of its own. Richardson’s discovery of Sawin’s notes, compiled in the mid-1800s, breathed new life into people, places, and events that seemed to have vanished with hardly a trace of themselves left behind. In an unusual collaboration, Richardson and Sawin combine their energies and interests to provide the modern reader with a palpable sense of this New England hilltown’s past.

Cover photograph: Cellar hole of the home of Reverend John C. Ball (1819–1872) on Old Egypt Road