

## Fifty Years Ago: March 1964

### Town Meeting votes to sell the old Town Hall

Here's some old news from the Andover, East Andover, West Andover, Potter Place, and Cilleyville "gossip" columns of the Franklin Journal Transcript, selected by Heather Makechnie.

#### March 7, 1964

Richard Powers, Jr., of Potter Place, had the misfortune to dislocate his shoulder while skiing at King Ridge last week, and Sandra Nelson of Andover broke her ankle while skiing in Vermont.

Showing this week at the Regal Theatre, alongside Walt Disney's Son of Flubber, are a triple feature set of shows: Joy Ride, Hot Girl, and Speed Crazy.

#### March 14, 1964

At Town Meeting last week, in the midst of a snowstorm, the Andover voters decided to sell the Andover Town Hall – the one dated 1822. If the two were turned right side up, however, it would be 1872. And they also voted to purchase the railroad property in East Andover.

Andover was one of the few towns to lower its budget this year. The present appropriation is \$45,096.76 compared to last year's \$46,079.01.

A total of 334 voters were present and elected the following officers: John Whitcomb, Clerk; Harry Emerson, three years, and Ralph Chaffee, one year, Selectman; Victor E. Phelps, Treasurer; John Whitcomb, Tax Collector; John Jurta, Road Agent; Lawrence C. Rising, Amy Corkum, and Lorna Johnson, Library Trustees; Ralph Chaffee, Trustee of Trust Funds. Paul Fenton was elected Moderator and Marie Rising, Clerk.

#### March 21, 1964

Congratulations go to Mr. and Mrs. George Finnie on the birth of a daughter at Franklin Hospital last week. The Finnies live in the former Charles Putney Home.

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Cloutier and

family of Franklin have moved into their trailer on the Flaghole Road.

The flu has hit the school and parents are asked to keep the children at home if they're coming down with it so it won't spread any further.

#### March 28, 1964

Andover Arts Class Ready For First Showing of its Work: Back last September, a group of Andover and East Andover folks started a series of art classes under the direction of Miss Betty Jean Bassett. They've been meeting regularly every Wednesday night since ... and now they're ready for the first public exhibit of their work.

"None of them has ever had any experience in Art," Miss Bassett said this week, "though they've been interested. The results of their efforts since September are amazing."

In subject matter, the drawings and paintings are mostly of local scenes, including the East Andover church, the Proctor church, the Cilleyville covered bridge, and other local scenes. Exhibitors include Grace Chaffee, Florence Thompson, Clara Kidder, Gertrude Brouthers, Myla Morse, Mrs. Robert Wilson, Marsha Condon, Harold Kidder, Lee Stevens, Ronald Bigelo, David Jewett, Miss Barbara Jewett, Miss Janet Stafford, Rufus Stacey, Nellie Mariani, and Mrs. Lee Locke.

Mr. and Mrs. Herbert L. Young celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary Saturday, March 23, 1964 from 7 to 10 PM in the East Andover Library. Over 150 relatives and friends attended this celebration, and numerous greetings and gifts were received. Mr. Young was Road Agent in the town for several years, later entering the poultry business. He is presently retired.

The National Spelling Bee finals for this region will be held at the Elks Home in Franklin this Saturday. Miss Martha Burney of the fifth-grade and Irene Stacey of the eighth-grade are the two from Andover schools who will compete.

## Many Questions Linger Around Weston Picture Gallery

### East Andover marvel traveled the country

By Kenneth Reid  
Andover Historical Society

In the 1840s, Mary Weston, the artistic daughter of a Hebron, New Hampshire Baptist minister, moved to East Andover with her new husband, 30 years her senior. Her husband Valentine had just retired from a successful business career in New York City. He was proud of his wife's artistic prowess, and upon their arrival in East Andover, he immediately began a construction project. He built his wife an elaborate "pre-fab" and portable traveling art gallery which could travel around the country to showcase her art work.

Their arrival in East Andover created quite a stir among the locals, and for the next two years while the Weston Picture Gallery was under construction, local town folks made frequent visits to his Maple Street residence to review and marvel at the progress.

In 1851, the traveling exhibition hall's tour was launched in northern New England. Just two years later, an advertisement announces the auction and sale of the building. Many mysteries and unfinished tales were left in the wake of this rather strange and bizarre story which occurred in early Andover's history.

The earliest known record of the Weston Picture Gallery appeared in a newspaper article in the Essex County Freeman on July 3, 1852. The article reports that in Salem, Massachusetts, the works of Mrs. Mary Bartlett Pillsbury Weston from East Andover, New Hampshire are on display.

An 1898 Franklin newspaper recounts the story of the Weston Picture Gallery, including its rise and fall. The Franklin article focuses a lot on the magnificence of the building and its construction. It was composed of 220,000 separate pieces of wood, mostly cut on a scroll saw and put together with screws in sections so it could be easily dismantled, loaded on train cars, and transported to the next city where the exhibit would be shown.

An early woodcut illustration (below) depicts what the gallery looked like. It was described as having a yard 64 by 41 feet inside the fence. There was a circular ticket booth through which patrons would pass to gain entrance to the gallery. The building was a circle 25 feet in diameter, and it was 55 feet tall. The dome was comprised of glass. The interior "was handsomely decorated, carpeted, mirrored,

and warmed, and in the evening lighted by an immense chandelier fourteen and one half feet in diameter."

Mrs. Weston was a prolific and accomplished artist and painted for more than half a century. Prior to 1850, she painted a large oil painting from the vantage point of Artist's Ledge in East Andover, which was later named Sunday School Hill. According to a descendant of Mrs. Weston, the hill is located "on Chase Hill Road going towards Marston Hill."

A descendant of Mrs. Weston described the painting in detail while standing in front of it. She describes the village of East Andover including churches, cemeteries, farms, buildings, and a train, with Ragged and Kearsarge Mountains appearing in the background. The painting was done when much of the landscape had been cleared, because she describes sweeping fields and stone walls going up the sides of the mountains.

Efforts to locate this painting are underway, and there is some reason to believe that it, along with other paintings by Mrs. Weston, are in the Smithsonian.

Information in the Andover Historical Society's files contains many bits of information from newspapers, diaries, scrapbooks, family member notes, written records, and records of oral history. As I have attempted to piece together these fragments, the characters of this very old story have begun to come alive.

I hope to consolidate this information and add a personal dimension to the previously written record. By doing so, I hope to recapture a small snippet of what life was like in Andover in the 19th century. If anyone should have any information to contribute regarding this subject, I would appreciate receiving it. Please contact Andover Historical Society president Pat Cutter at 735-5628.

The *Beacon* needs help with reporting about town news. 735-6099



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