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ately north of Boston, for fourteen years. This was the very church that Gardner Colby had long attended, and Jackson was the very minister who had so strongly influenced Gardner's faith and who had baptized him in 1830.

In retrospect, then, we can begin to fill in some of the blanks in Mary's story. Although her parents, while now well aware of her artistic ambitions, had hoped to keep her at home with them still, the arguments for letting her venture forth on her own were becoming ever stronger, just as was her own longing to become a professional painter. "Mr. Pillsbury was not rich, and his daughter had the prospect of being ultimately obliged to depend on her earnings for a subsistence." Now the family's situation had worsened. "Her father needed all the aid she could give him: he had suffered much, and sickness in his family had crippled his narrow resources." So Mary, it would seem, was finally allowed to go to Boston to seek employment and opportunity there. But she was a young woman – still a minor – venturing alone far from home: certainly her father would have done all that he could to help and protect her at this fraught time. Most obviously, he would have written about her to his Boston friends and contacts, informing them of her move to that city and asking them to do what they could to help her there. And these Boston contacts would inevitably have been for the most part Baptist ones – fellow ministers, missionary and temperance society colleagues, other prominent Baptists.

Although he had always lived and served in small, rural New Hampshire towns, Rev. Pillsbury had gained wide recognition over the years for his goodness, capability, and intelligence, and had forged many connections that could well have helped him (and Mary) now. He had been an early trustee of the New Hampton Academy in New Hampshire (an early seminary for Baptists not far from Hebron), and was also a trustee of the New Hampshire Baptist Domestic Mission Society and a leader in the Merrimack County Temperance Society. His religious activities in New Hampshire were regularly followed by the Christian Watchman, which was published weekly in Boston by the Baptist Missionary Society of Massachusetts. Beyond the church, he also had forged connections in government and politics, since he had served several years in the New Hampshire State Legislature as the representative from Hebron (1827-28) and Sutton (1833).

These connections now served him well. Mary, alone in Boston, soon found that she had advocates and even protectors there. Her guardian angels, it would seem, were primarily Baptist, although perhaps she herself never puzzled out all the connections.

By 1837, then, Mary was living and working in Connecticut, dividing her time between Hartford and Willington. She quickly won admirers, patrons, friends; she completed several dozen portraits. In Willington she painted portraits of the members of many families, including

that of Jonathan Weston, whose daughter, Susan, three years younger than she, became a particular friend. This was another staunchly Baptist family: Jonathan was a deacon of the Willington Baptist church.

Mary kept busy as an artist for a few years, and "had now many offers of a home, and invitations to spend her time in different families, but she preferred living entirely for her art." Eventually, however, another offer, from Jonathan Weston's brother Valentine, a New York City widower who "took a great interest in her paintings" when he encountered them and her while visiting his brother in Willington, made her think. "He urged her to visit New York, and improve herself by lessons and study"; and now again she felt her old desire "to revisit the city, and find some method of making more rapid progress" in her artistry. Soon one of Valentine Weston's daughters followed up by inviting her to New York, "where she could profit by the instruction of experienced artists." Mary, although tempted, felt she could not yet afford the luxury. But the invitation was soon repeated and earnestly strengthened: "Her father . . . would procure her a teacher, and would make arrangements for the winter. She was pressed to make her home at his house; and should she not be successful in her undertaking, he pledged himself to see her safely back to her friends."

The opportunity was irresistible: Mary accepted the invitation and moved to the New York household of Mr. Valentine W. Weston in the fall of 1839. True to his word, Mr. Weston encouraged and supported her artistic studies. But, as Ellet decorously notes, Mary "must soon have made the discovery that another feeling, besides the wish to foster genius, had led Mr. Weston to be so anxious for her presence. Suffice it to say, that in three months she became his wife, with the understanding that she was to pursue the profession she had chosen without restraint." They married on January 5, 1840, on Mary's twenty-third birthday.

Theirs was of course a Baptist wedding, at the Oliver Street Baptist Church in New York. The minister who married them, the Rev. Spencer Houghton Cone, was a famous orator and the most prominent and popular Baptist minister in the country (although the abolitionist-leaning Rev. Pillsbury might well have been privately dismayed by Rev. Cone's South-friendly, compromising attitude toward slavery). So Mary Pillsbury Weston, child of rural New Hampshire, "the strange girl who wanted to be a painter," was now established at the very center of America's art world, New York City, with a husband both eager to support and encourage her artistic gifts and, as it happened, well situated socially to introduce her to important patrons for her portraits. She would continue to develop her remarkable talents for the next several years. When she returned to New Hampshire – this time to Andover – in about 1848, she was a well-established, highly accomplished artist – and also on the verge of becoming a new mother.

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phase project in 2016. Work continued through summer 2017 and the first portion, a completely renovated and redesigned gym, was completed in the fall of 2017, followed by a fitness center and new athletic training room space. Phase 3 has been going on for a little less than a year and the goal is to have it completed for December.

Proctor Academy Athletic Director Gregor Makechnie shared some of his thoughts on the new space. He states, "I am very excited about the new locker room space for female athletes and coaches. For many years, our locker room facilities have been inadequate. I am also excited about the spacious lobby that will offer a welcoming entrance to the Field House, a social gathering space for athletes and parents following competitions, and a comfortable space for community members to relax prior to, and following, athletic practice.

Beyond athletics, the renovation includes seven new classrooms and additional meeting spaces for the English, Social Science and Wellness departments. The two athletic trainers are also looking forward to the completion of

phase 3 of the project as both will have brand new office space.

The field house was built in the 1960's and has served the Proctor community in many ways. Gregor shared some of the hardships the renovation has caused the athletic department, "The athletic department has shown incredible patience and flexibility. Much of our athletic equipment has been temporarily housed in construction trailers. We have moved out of office into temporary office space, or accommodated construction workers in our offices. But, these are short-term sacrifices. Although inconvenient, they have not dampened excitement about the renovation efforts. In the winter, we will enjoy an amazing new space."

This space will benefit each and every member of the community who spends a portion of the day in Farrell Field House whether it be watching a basketball game, using the fitness center, or attending class or a wellness activity. Be sure to come see this new space this winter!

Henry Bechok is a senior at Proctor Academy from New London, New Hampshire.

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