

## Historical Significance of the Colonial Stone Walls near West Street, Gate House Drive, and Sylvan Road in Waltham

(by Marie Daly for Waltham Historical Commission, August 11, 2020)

The stone walls in the area of West Street, Gate House Drive and Sylvan Road mark the boundaries between two colonial farms that were established around 1710. These were the farms of Daniel Warren, son of Ensign John Warren,<sup>1</sup> and James Priest, grandson of Henry Bright.<sup>2</sup> The residences were located along West Street and the farms stretched back in a westward direction over Stony (aka Hobbs, and formerly Stowers) Brook and over the Weston town line.<sup>3</sup> To clarify the two properties, in this report, the property of the first settler, James Priest, is identified as the North Parcel on the supporting documentation and the property of the first settler, Daniel Warren, as the South Parcel. Also note, in the supporting documentation, deeds are labeled "MLR book/page".

Waltham and Weston were originally part of the early Watertown community, which was established in 1630. From Watertown, the town of Weston was established in 1713, and Waltham in 1738. Starting in 1636, the Watertown governing body allocated all the land in the township among the existing settlers. Each household received a homestead near the town center and parcels of farmland in what was to become Weston, meadowland in the various wetlands in the area, and uplands in what became North Waltham. Much of the land that later was to become Waltham was divided east-west into four squadrons or dividends, and each of the squadrons were divided north-south into twenty-seven to thirty-one lots. The squadrons and lots were numbered. This was called the Great Dividend Land Grants. The area of Winter Street and West Street was numbered Lots 29 – 31 in the first squadron.<sup>4</sup> This northwest corner of Colonial Watertown was settled probably before 1700. The 1707 Watertown meeting identified a number of already existing cartways, and established them as public roads. The northwest corner was included among these 1707 pre-existing "old cartways," which are indicator of even earlier settlement in the area.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the seventeenth century settlement of this area is evidenced by the 1682 Ensign John Warren house in Weston that still stands one-half mile away along West Street-Lexington Street roadway.<sup>6</sup>

As colonial homes and farms were established, the boundaries were marked initially with wooden fences, and as the land was turned into pastures, orchards, wood lots and tilled fields, stone walls were erected along the boundaries. In the case of Waltham, many of the walls were erected as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The houses and farms along West Street have been replaced by commercial development. These stone walls are often the only remnants of the colonial and agricultural heritage of our suburban communities. Such is the nature of the stone walls in this area.

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<sup>1</sup> Deed of John Coolidge to John and Daniel Warren, 1710, Middlesex Land Registry (MLR), 15: 409.

<sup>2</sup> Deed for Lots 30 & 31, 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, Moses Bordman to James Priest, 1715, MLR 17: 274. James Priest was likely living on Lot 30 by 1710, since the bounds of the 1710 Daniel Warren deed list James Priest as abutting on the north boundary.

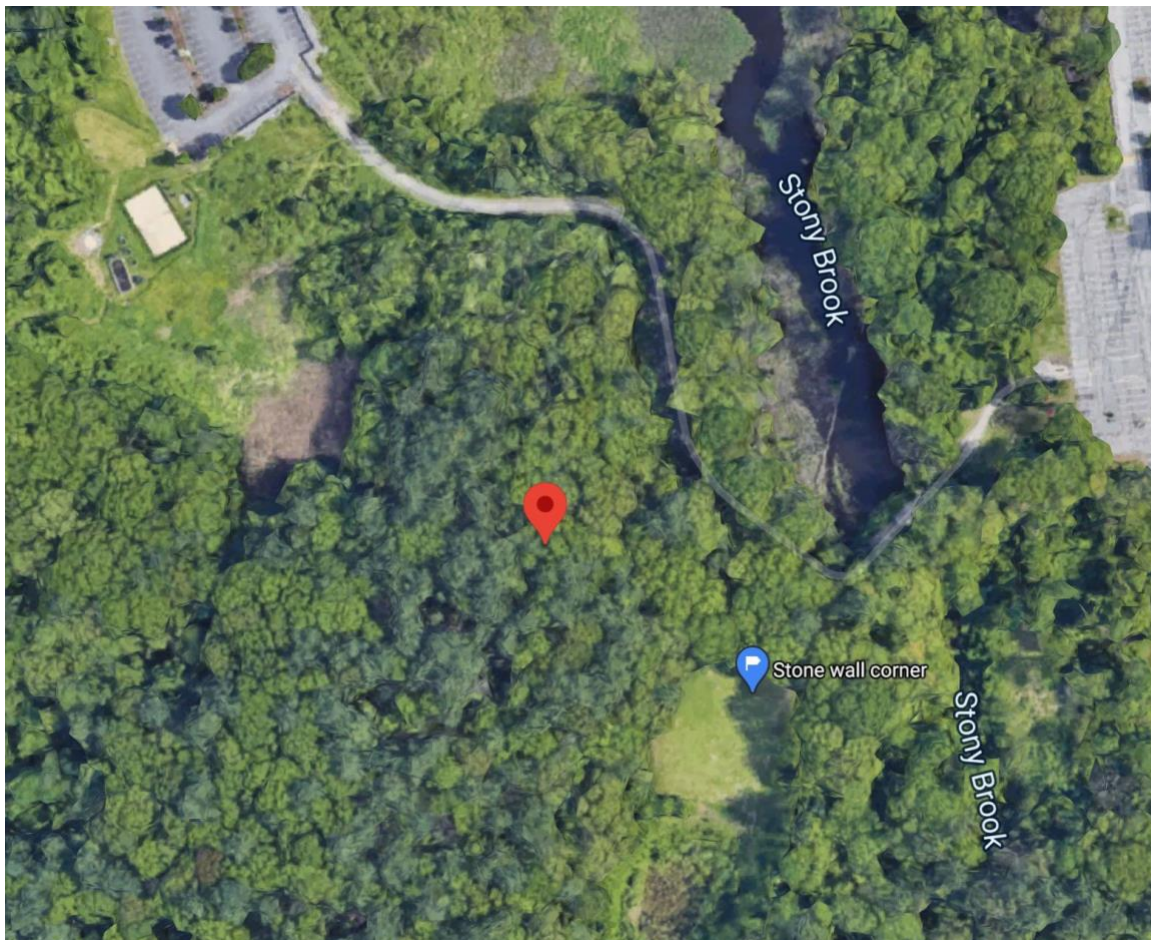
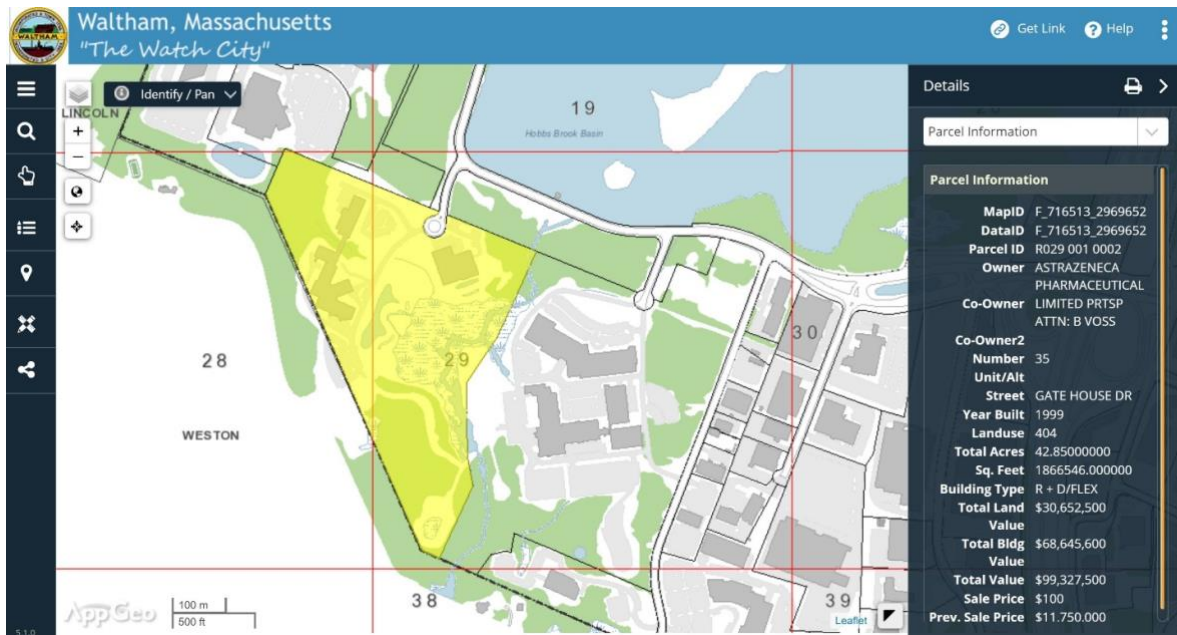
<sup>3</sup> Waltham City Atlases, 1918, 1955 and 1974.

<sup>4</sup> Edmund L. Sanderson, Waltham as a Precinct of Watertown and as a Town 1630 – 1884 (Waltham: Waltham Historical Society, Inc., 1936).

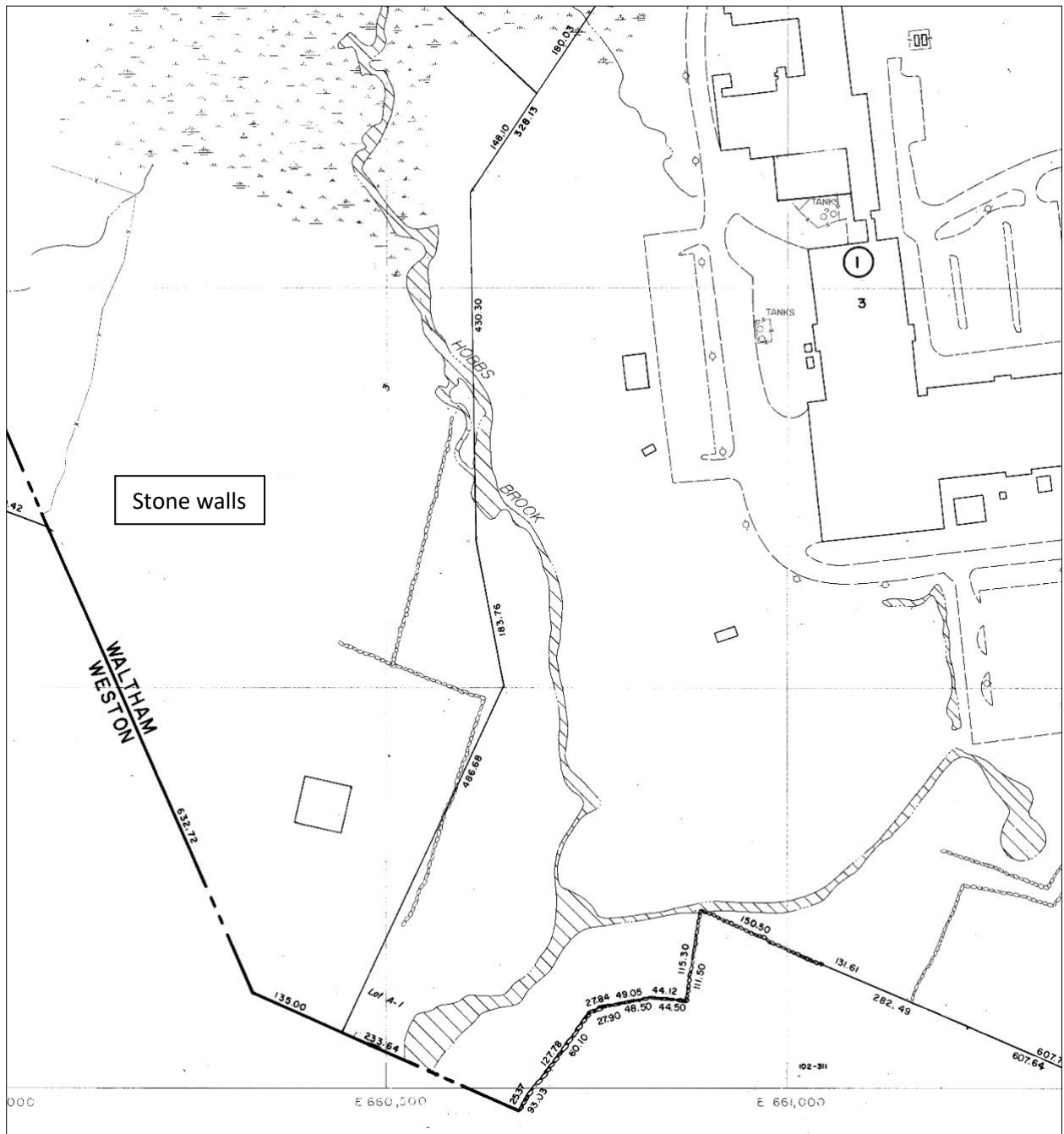
<sup>5</sup> Watertown Records Comprising the Third Book of Town Proceedings, Volume 2, p. 174-5 (Watertown: Watertown Historical Society, 1900)

<sup>6</sup> Alice Primer, Weston Historical Commission, Letter to the Editor re John Warren House, 71 Lexington Street, Nov. 21, 2018 <https://weston.wickedlocal.com/news/20181121/letter-save-17th-century-houses-in-weston>

## Detailed Colonial History of West Street, Gate House Drive, and Sylvan Road Area

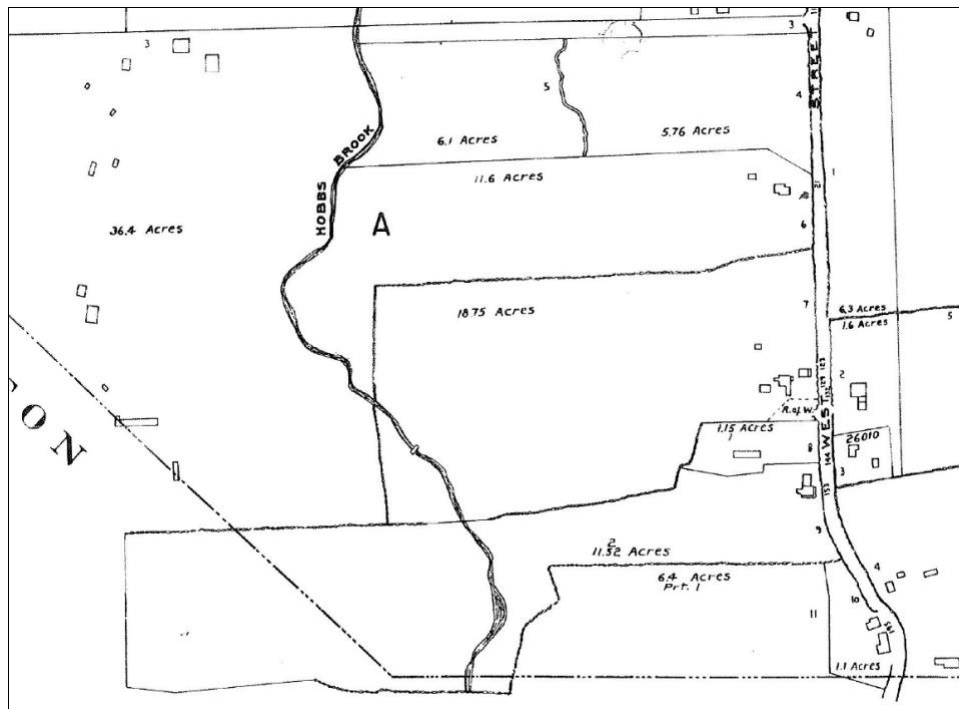


Google maps

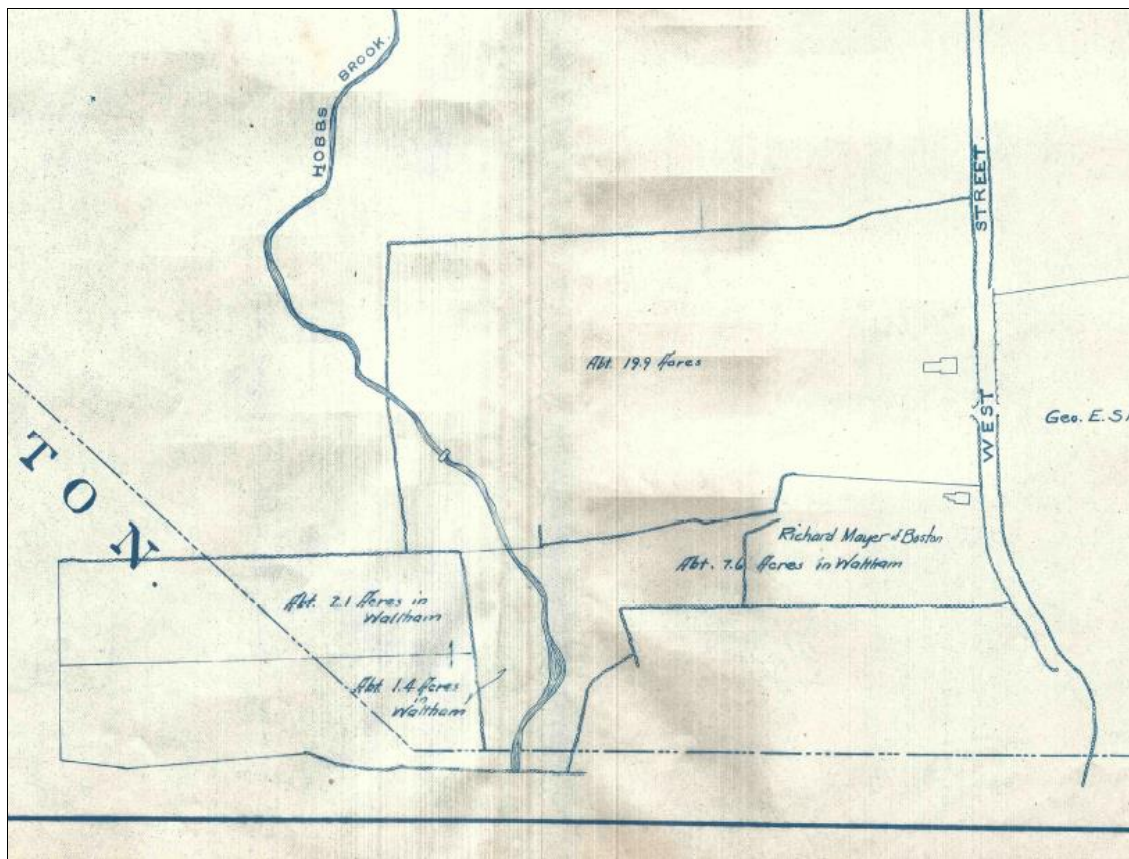


1974 atlas

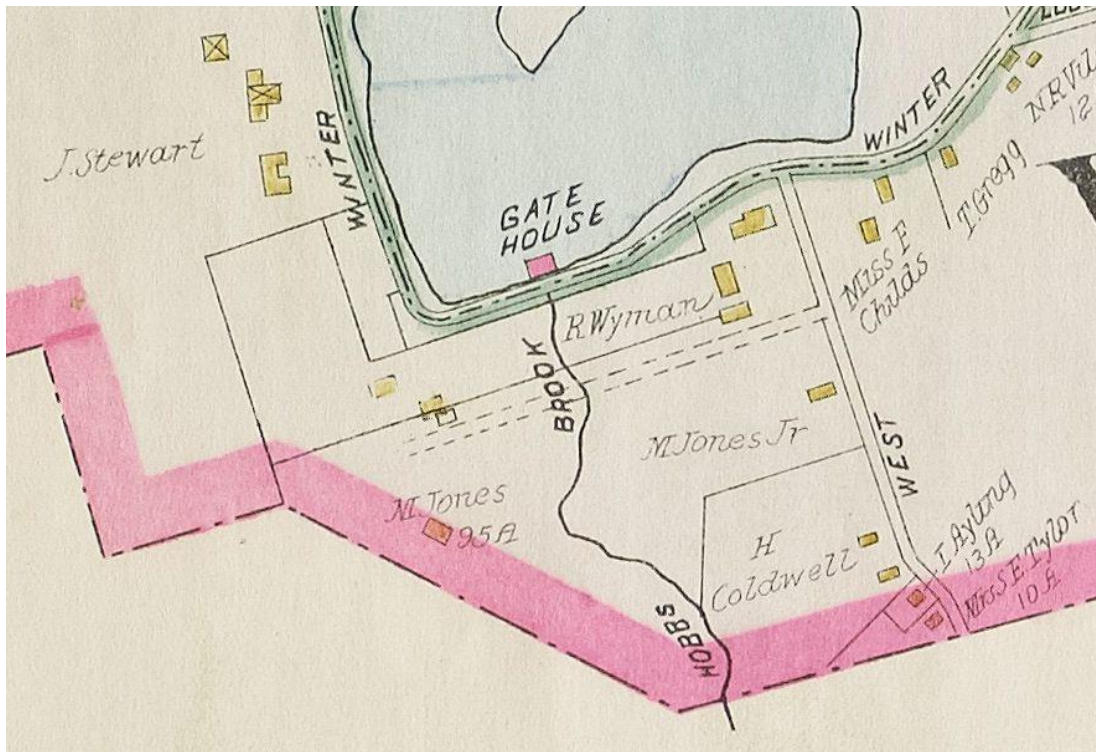




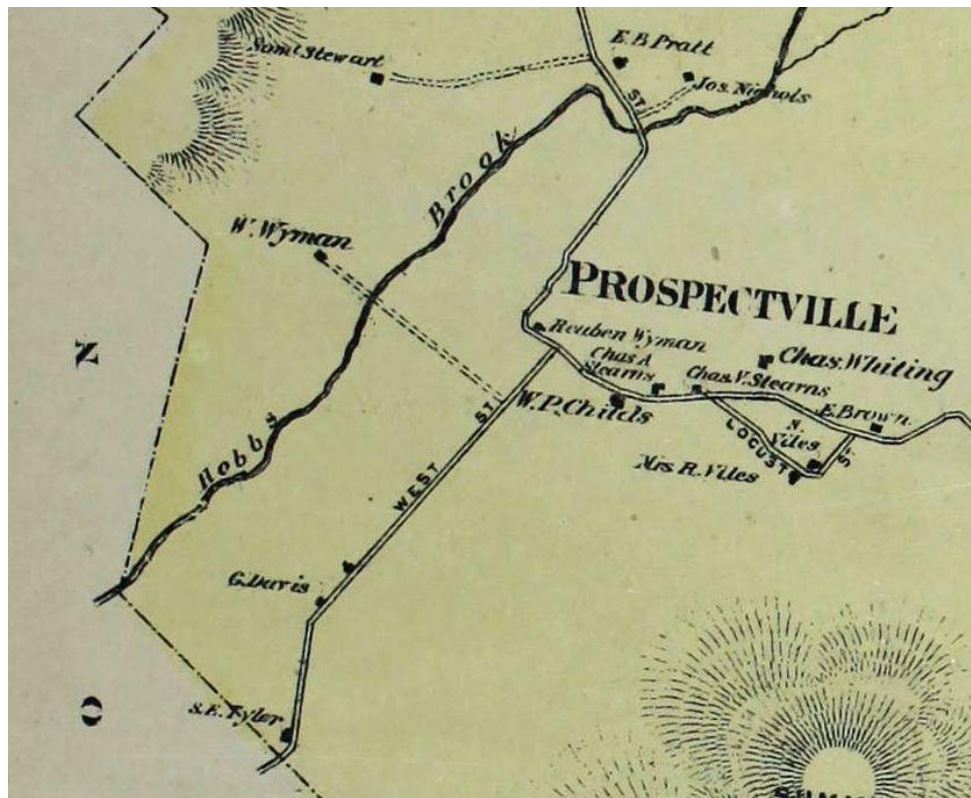
1955 atlas



1918 map

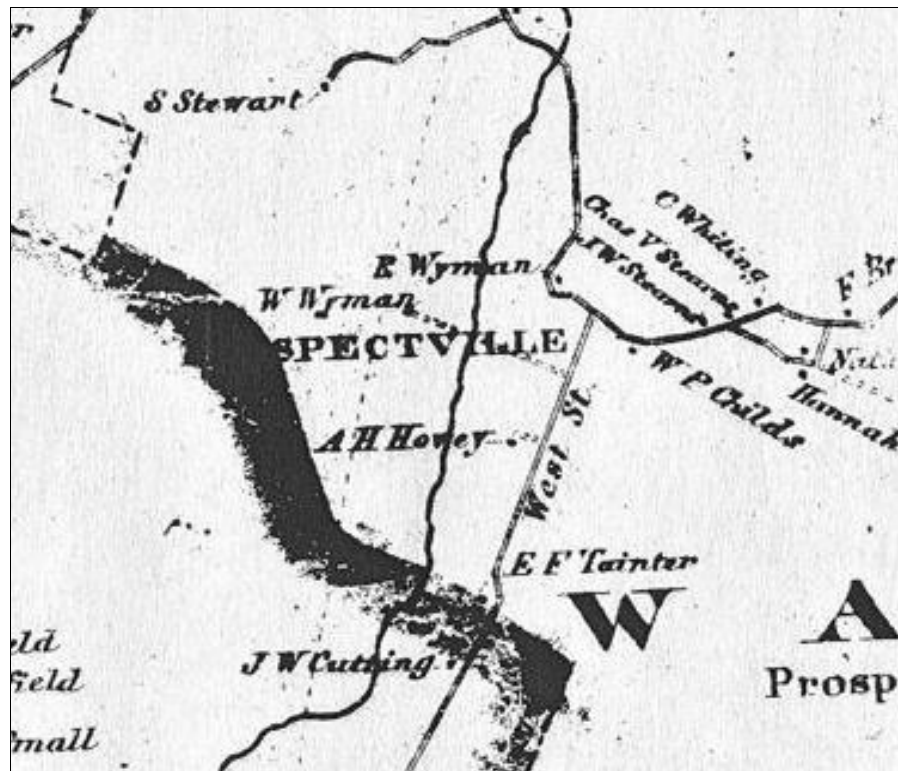


1900 map



1875 map





1866 map



1854 Woodford map

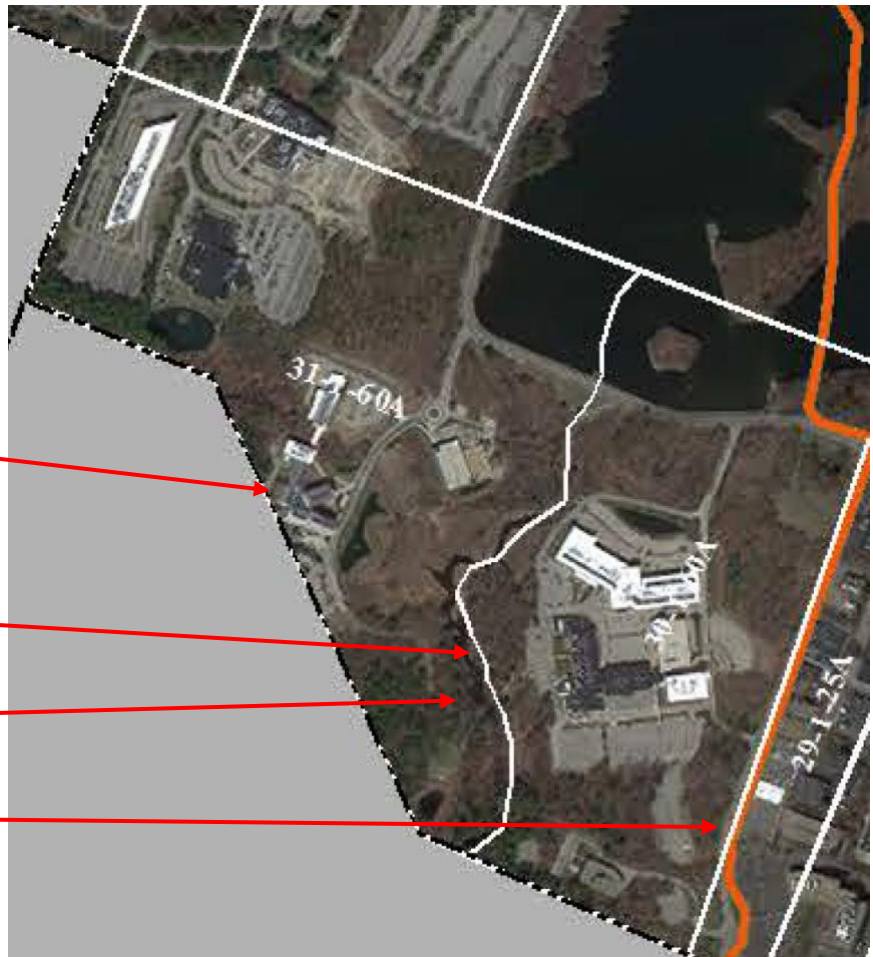
1636 Colonial Watertown lot lines superimposed on current ortho map

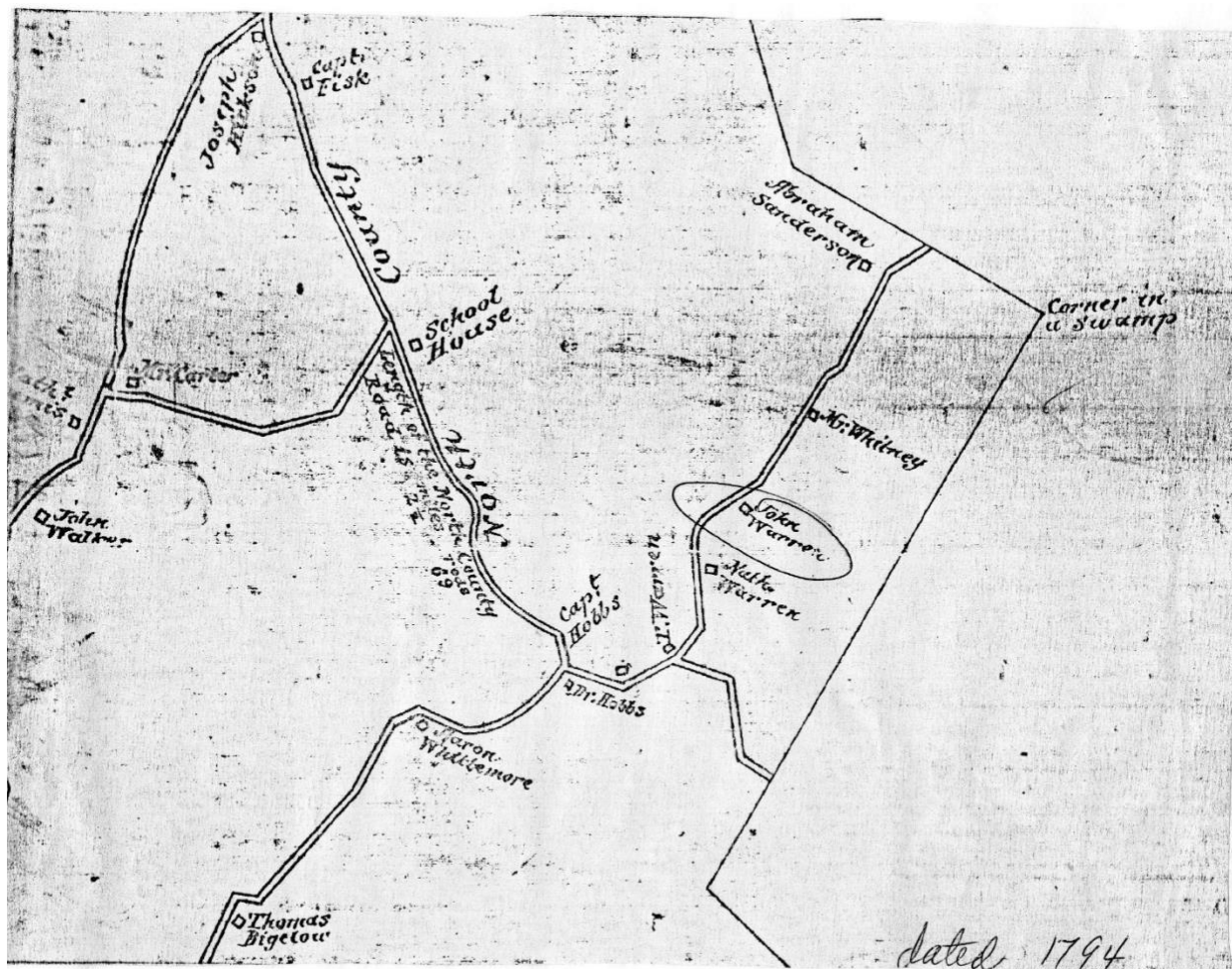
AstraZeneca

Stony Brook

Stone walls

West Street





Kingsbury Map, Weston, 1794  
 John Warren Homestead, Lexington Street, encircled



## North Parcel

- 1715 Moses Bordman to James Priest [MLR 17/274] 260 acres [both grandsons of Henry Bright]  
N – Squadron line; E – John Warren, Jr.; S – Squadron line; W – Daniel Eastabrook  
Also the Thirtieth and Thirty First Lots of Dividend lands, bounded N – Squadron line; E- George Stearns; S – Squadron line; W – Heirs of Martin Townsend, deceased [120 acres]  
Also 15 acres of meadow land
- 1756 Death, James Priest
- 1757 James Priest estate to Samuel Peirce [MLR 56/147] 50 acres in Waltham and Weston  
N – Isaac Child; E – Town way; S – Mehitabel Warren; W – Nathan Fiske  
1804 - Amasa Peirce (oldest son of Samuel) to Jonas Fiske (son-in-law of Samuel) [MLR 159/74]  
90 acres in Waltham & Weston  
N – Solomon Child; E – Town way & Solomon Harrington; S – Solomon Harrington & formerly Capt. Jonathan Fisk; W – Capt. Jonathan Fiske, Solomon Child & Abraham Bemis, Jr.
- 1765 Samuel Peirce to Samuel Peirce, Jr. [MLR 65/129] 60 acres; one full moiety or ½ part of farm, in Waltham and Weston, containing dwelling house & barn  
N – Isaac Child and Isaac Child, Jr.; E – Town way; S – Land of Mehitabel Warren; W – Nathan Fiske & Abraham Bemis
- 1772 Death, Samuel Peirce, Sr.
- 1795 Samuel Peirce, Jr. to Samuel Peirce, III [MLR 125/220] 90 acres with house & barn in Waltham and Weston  
N – Isaac Child; E – Town way & John Viles; S – John Viles & Capt. Jonathan Fiske; W – Capt. Jonathan Fiske, Isaac Child, & Abraham Bemis.  
Also 3 acres in Waltham & Weston, bounded N – Samuel Peirce; E – John Viles; S – John Viles & Samuel Peirce; W – Capt. Jonathan Fiske
- 1796 Death, Abigail (Stearns) Peirce, widow of Samuel Peirce, Sr.
- 1801 Death, Samuel Peirce, III (unmarried)
- 1801 Samuel Peirce, Jr. to Amasa Peirce [MLR 141/508] 90 acres with house & barn in Waltham & Weston  
N – Solomon Child; E – Town way & Solomon Harrington; S – Solomon Harrington & Capt. Jonathan Fiske; W – Capt. Jonathan Fiske, Solomon Child & Abraham Bemis, Jr.
- 1804 Amasa Peirce to Jonas Fiske [MLR 159/74] 90 acres in Waltham and Weston  
N – Solomon Child; Town way & Solomon Harrington; S - Solomon Child & formerly Capt. Jonathan Fiske; W – formerly Capt. Jonathan Fiske; Solomon Child & Abraham Bemis, Jr.
- 1822 Death, Jonas Fiske
- 1823 Jonas Fiske estate to Isaiah Dunster [249/334] 90 acres in Weston & Waltham  
N – Solomon Child; E – Town way & Solomon Harrington; S – Solomon Harrington & Nathan Fiske; W – Nathan Fiske, Solomon Child, and Abraham Bemis, Jr.
- 1824 Isaiah Dunster to Abner Sanderson [MLR 253/163] 90 acres in Waltham & Weston  
N – Solomon Child; E – Town way & Solomon Harrington; S – Solomon Harrington & formerly Nathan Fiske; W – Formerly Nathan Fiske, Abraham Bemis & Solomon Child
- 1860 Benjamin Sanderson et al to Nelson Jenny [MLR 835/111] 90 acres in Waltham & Weston  
N – Reuben Wyman; E – Town way called West Street; S – Elias B. Armstrong; W – John W. Cutting, Sewall Fiske, Leonard Childs & formerly Mary Pickering
- 1865 Nelson Jenny to William Wyman [MLR 948/358] 90 acres in Waltham & Weston  
N – Reuben Wyman; E – West Street; S – E. B. Armstrong, John Cutting, Jonas Fiske; W – Leonard Childs & Abby B. Frost
- 1875 William Wyman to Reuben Wyman [MLR 1377/364] 90 acres

N – Reuben Wyman; E – West Street; S – G. Davis, Sidney Tyler, Jonas Fiske; W – Thomas Childs & Samuel Stewart

#### South Parcel

- 1710 John Coolidge to John & Daniel Warren, sons of Ensign John Warren [MLR 15/409] 56 acres & 2 acres of meadow; southern parts of Lots 29 and 30, in Watertown  
N – James Priest; E – John Coolidge; S – William Fiske & Daniel Benjamin; W – heirs of Martin Townsend
- 1731 Death, Daniel Warren [wife, Mehitabel (Garfield) Warren]
- 1770 Jonathan Fiske to Samuel Peirce [MLR 70/445] 4 ¼ acres  
N – Elijah Warren, deceased; E – Asa Warren & Lydia Warren; S – Samuel Peirce; W – Nathan Fiske, deceased; right in Daniel Warren estate
- 1782 Death, Mehitabel (Garfield) Warren
- 1785 Daniel Warren (Jr.) to John Viles [MLR 89/18] 17 acres  
N – Samuel Peirce & the 1/3 set off to Mehitabel Warren, deceased, out of her late husband's estate; E – town way; S – Capt. Jonathan Fisk; W – Capt. Jonathan Fisk, Samuel Peirce  
Also 2/9 of 7 acres set off to Mehitabel Warren, deceased  
N – Samuel Peirce; E – town way; S & W – above described lands with privilege of running the brook
- 1786 John Viles to Samuel Peirce to John Viles [MLR 94/68] 2/9 of 7 acres set off to Mehitabel Warren, deceased  
N – Samuel Peirce; E – town way; S & W – John Viles
- 1786 John Viles to Samuel Peirce [MLR 94/69] 1 ½ acres + 2 rods  
N – Samuel Peirce; E – the 1/3 set off to Mehitabel Warren; S – John Viles, the SE corner being a wild cherry tree then running westerly by 30 rods to a heap of stones, being the SW corner; W – Samuel Peirce
- 1800 John Viles to Solomon Harrington [MLR 137/216] 40 acres with buildings  
N – Samuel Pierce, Jr.; E – town road, lately Capt. Jonathan Fisk; S – Enoch Brown, lately Capt. Jonathan Fisk, Amos Sanderson; W – lately Capt. Jonathan Fisk with privilege of running the brook
- 1801 Samuel Peirce to Solomon Harrington [MLR 141/378] strip of land, 30 rods  
N – Samuel Peirce by a line running from northeast corner of Solomon Harrington's shoemaking shop across a rock on which there is a heap of stones, thence in a straight line to the road to a heap of stones about three rods [~49.5 feet] from shoemaking shop; E – town road; S – Solomon Harrington; W - ?
- 1853 Estate of Solomon Harrington, William P. Childs, adm. to Amos Sanderson [MLR 641/386] 40 acres with buildings  
N – Heirs of Abner Sanderson; E – town way, John W. Cutting; S – William Sanderson, John W. Cutting; W – Heirs of Abner Sanderson, John W. Cutting with privilege of running the brook  
Note: Amos Sanderson, Jr. was born in 1808 in Weston, and was the son of Amos Sanderson. His occupation in the 1850 and 1855 censuses in Weston and Waltham was miller. He died in Waltham in 1856.
- 1859 William P. Child, adm. Amos Sanderson estate to Elias B. Armstrong [MLR 778/575]  
N – Heirs of Abner Sanderson, deceased; E – Town road & John W. Cutting; S – William Sanderson & John W. Cutting; W – Abner Sanderson & John W. Cutting
- 1865 Nelson Jenny to Elias B. Armstrong [MLR 945/58] 1 ½ acres part of Abner Sanderson estate  
N – Abner Sanderson; E – Elias Armstrong; W – Abner Sanderson; S – Elias Armstrong
- 1869 Joseph H. Huntington et ux to James W. Greenwood [MLR 1095/197]

- N – William Wyman; E – Town road & John W. Cutting; S – Elijah Tainter & John W. Cutting; W – William Wyman & John W. Cutting, subject to turning of brook
- 1870 James W. Greenwood to Gardiner Davis [MLR 1139/160] 41 ½ acres in Waltham & Weston  
N – William Wyman; E – Town road & John W. Cutting; S – Elijah Tainter & John W. Cutting; W – William Wyman & John W. Cutting. Including small strip of land. Subject to turning of brook, J. W. Cutting, which runs through the property.

Daniel Warren of Waltham & Weston, was born on Apr. 30, 1689 in what became Weston, and was the son of Ensign John Warren and Mary Brown. Daniel Warren married 1<sup>st</sup> Hannah Bigelow, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Mehitabel Garfield. He purchased parts of Great Dividend Lots 29 & 30 (South parcel) in 1710. He died intestate in what became Waltham before 1731. Mehitabel (Garfield) Warren died in Waltham in 1782. The house of Ensign John Warren is one of the oldest houses in Weston, and was located about ½ mile south along Lexington Street (which is the continuation of West Street in Weston).

“The house at 71 Lexington St. in Weston first belonged to John Warren, who was born in England circa 1585 and sailed to Boston with John Winthrop. He was in Watertown by 1631 and soon moved west for more land, buying 162 acres in what is now Weston. Historians think the house was built around the time of the 1682 marriage of his son, Ensign John Warren. What we now call Lexington Street ran behind the house until the road was straightened in 1744. The house is in remarkably intact antique condition. The current homeowner, who with her late husband owned the house since 1971, is only the third family to have owned the house in more than 300 years. Inside, there are many fine fireplaces, wide-board floors and an interesting original stairway. Several rooms have wood-paneled walls that have never been painted. The Weston Historical Commission plans a Preservation Restriction that would protect many of these interior features, as well as maintaining forever the three façades visible from Lexington Street. The Historical Commission has sponsored funding requests for both of these important houses. The Community Preservation Committee unanimously supported our requests. Please support warrant articles 8 and 9 at Town Meeting and save Weston’s earliest history.” – Alicia Primer, Weston Historical Commission (Letter to the editor, [www.wickedlocal.com](http://www.wickedlocal.com), 2018) The purchase of a historic preservation restriction for \$81,000 was approved in 2019, and is now in progress.

James Priest, was born in Waltham in 1675, and died in Waltham in 1756, and in 1757, the executors of his estate sold his property to Samuel Peirce of Waltham. He was a grandson of Henry Bright, and in 1715, he purchased the right to Henry Bright’s Great Dividend lots 30 and 31 from his cousin, Moses Bordman. However, he may have been living on the property before 1715, since in 1710, he is listed as an abutter on the north side of Daniel Warren’s land.



Samuel Peirce of Waltham, was born in Waltham in 1741, and was the son of Samuel Peirce and Abigail Stearns. Samuel Peirce married Ruth Lee in 1768. He died in Waltham in 1806 and was buried in Grove Hill Cemetery. His sons-in-law, Solomon Harrington, John Viles and Jonas Fiske owned the north and south parcels on West Street. Children of Samuel and Ruth Peirce:

1. Amasa Peirce m. Lucy Smith of Lincoln
2. Hannah, m. Solomon Harrington
3. Ruth, m. Jonas Fiske
4. Samuel, d. age 8
5. Luther, d. age 20
6. Abigail, m. Jonas Fiske, widower of Ruth
7. Sally, m. Cyrus Haywood of Concord
8. Lydia, m. John Viles



Abraham Sanderson of Weston, was born in 1735-6, son of Abraham Sanderson and Mercy Gale of Lunenburg; he married Sarah Wheeler in 1761. His house at 178 Lexington Street, Weston, on the Waltham border, went to John W. Cutting. His son, Amos Sanderson, settled along West Street in Waltham in the south parcel. Children of Abraham and Sarah Sanderson:

1. Abijah Sanderson, m. Lydia Jones
2. Abraham Sanderson, m. Hannah Peirce
3. Isaac Sanderson, m. Lucy Hewes, Anna Bridge
4. Jacob Sanderson, m. Betsy Thayer
5. Sarah Sanderson, m. Charles Peirce
6. Susanna Sanderson, m. Jonas White
7. Amos Sanderson (lived on West Street in south parcel)
8. Betsy Sanderson, m. Abijah Upham
9. Phinehas Sanderson, m. Phebe Chinery
10. Polly Sanderson, m. Abijah Child of Waltham