

## THE WELLINGTONS OF TRAPELO ROAD

by Elizabeth Castner<sup>1</sup>

Roger Wellington was in Watertown as early as 1636. He lived first in the eastern part of the town, his homestead being mostly in Mt. Auburn but was divided by the present Cambridge line. In 1659 he bought a house and 12 acres of land in the northern part now Belmont. In 1696 he deeded this purchase, "my now mansion house", to his son Oliver reserving the use of the house for the remainder of his life. He died nearly two years later at an advanced age. He was a large land holder owning between 250 and 300 acres, in many lots, some of them in Cambridge but most of them in Watertown. Watertown at that time included a large part of Belmont, all of Waltham north of the river, Weston and a part of Lincoln.<sup>2</sup>

One of these tracts was Lot No. 14 in the 4th squadron of Great Dividends. This was next to the Cambridge now the Lexington line and, referring to the map was the rectangle A-B-C-D. This was a grant of 36 acres made to Robert Abbott in 1636 but acquired by Roger Wellington in 1642 or 1643. He had five sons and one daughter, Mary, who at the time of his death was a widow having married Henry Maddock and then John Coolidge Jr. His real estate was divided between these six either by deeds shortly before his death or by his will. As this lot is not mentioned in either the will or recorded deed it was probably included in the residue that was willed to sons John, Joseph and Benjamin and grandson John Maddock. We do not know how this residue was divided but this lot was owned in 1707 by Joseph as shown by the description of the highway now called Trapelo Road that was then formally laid out by a town committee although it had been in use for many years.

This description states that the way was through the land of Joseph Wellington to Isaac Stearns' then north to the Cambridge line then on the south side of the line, this part of the description agreeing with the location of Bow Street. (see map) Joseph Wellington's home was on Trapelo road but nearly two miles to the east. It was on the south side and near the north-east corner of the land belonging to the Walter E. Fernald State School. Joseph died in December 1794 and sometime before he gave or sold, there is no deed recorded, the northern part of this lot to his son Thomas. His heirs sold the southern part, 15 acres of woodland, to Ebenezer Brown of Cambridge in 1725. This sale included also the homestead and all the balance of Joseph's estate. The northern part of this lot remained in the Wellington family until recent times.

As Thomas Wellington was an only son he probably lived with his father during his early married life. He was married previous to 1709 and the births of three of his five children were recorded in Watertown. The birth of the third, Thomas, Jr. was in 1714 and he moved to

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<sup>2</sup> Some paragraph breaks have been added to the original manuscript during digitization for ease of readability. This manuscript was digitized by Laurence A. Green.

Cambridge his permanent home probably soon after for the next January his childless uncle, John Wellington of Cambridge made his will in which he left his homestead and all land in Cambridge to his "cousin" Thomas Wellington son of his brother Joseph. As John was then over 76 years old he probably needed a younger man to carry on his farm and so chose his nephew.

John lived to be 88 years old so Thomas did not come into full possession until 1726. In 1718 he, then of Cambridge, bought in Watertown a house, barn and orchard with 29 acres of land from Thomas Mead and John Peirce. This farm seems to have been Lot No. 18 in the fourth squadron of Great Dividends, shown on the map by portion G-B-I-J. It was first granted to John Doggett but soon purchased by Richard Waite. It was included in the inventory of Waite's estate in 1660 but was acquired shortly afterwards by John Smith a son of the Thomas Smith who came to Watertown in 1635 and had built, about 1651, a house at the eastern end of Trapelo Road between Joseph Wellington's and Beaver Brook.

John Smith did not receive a deed of this lot until 1678 when John Wincoll sold him 40 acres said to have been bought of Richard Waite and Miles Ives. (Ives was owner of the lot bordering Waite's lot on the east.) This deed states that this land had "been in the possession of said John Smith many years whereupon he has built, fenced and planted." In 1672 a highway between Watertown and Concord was laid out. It seems to have followed Trapelo Road as far as Woburn Street and then to have gone by that way across the Cambridge line and so on to the present Concord Avenue. At or near the turn it passed between the houses of John Smith and John Stratton. The latter was a brother-in-law of Smith. This fixes the date of his house between 1668 and 1672. Stratton had a 10-acre home stall at the time of his death in 1691. This was perhaps purchased of Smith and would account for the latter having only 30 acres when in 1715, he, being then "old and infirm", deeded his house and that amount of land to his sons-in-law Thomas Mead and John Peirce, they to care for him as long as he lived and then to distribute whatever was left of his estate among the surviving children. His death is not recorded but was probably not long before the sale to Thomas Wellington referred to above.

It is not known that the latter ever lived on this purchase but he may have for a short time as he was elected surveyor of highways in Watertown in 1719. Nothing has been found to show who lived on this farm up to about 1735. He died in 1759 leaving all his Waltham land by his will signed in that year to his son Thomas Jr., "where he now lives."

The son had probably been living there since his marriage in 1735. This land in Waltham included a house, barn and 22.25 acres in the homestead, 22.5 acres pasture land, A-E-F-D, and a 5-acre lot further west. It will be seen that about 7 acres of the homestead must have been sold although no deed has been found. This was probably the part north of Trapelo Road and west of Woburn Street. It is uncertain where the house of John Smith was but it is most likely to have been on the east side of Woburn Street and it seems that Thomas Wellington, Jr. must have either built a new house or enlarged the old for he is said to have kept a tavern here. He married Margaret Stone and they had a family of nine sons and five daughters. Two of the sons were in the French and Indian war, one of them, Jonathan, dying on his passage home from Quebec, only nineteen years old. Six of the sons represented Waltham in the Revolution.

He died in 1783 and his real estate was settled on his sixth son, William, the only one of the seven surviving sons able and willing to undertake the burden of discharging the obligations

to the other heirs. This estate consisted of the homestead, then containing only 18 acres, about 55 acres in Lexington, the "old pasture" (being the part of A-E-F-D south of Bow Street) and the "new pasture." (the part north of Bow Street) The Whitney farm lying between the homestead and the pastures was then owned by William Wellington. This farm was of 40 acres and was Lot No. 13 of the Great Dividends. Like Lot No. 12 it did not extend as far south as No. 14. The squadron lines parallel to the Lexington line that formed the north and south bounds of these strips or squadrons of dividends appear to have been offset to the north here probably on account of the Chester meadows that extended into the southern part of the territory allotted to the dividends. Lot No. 13 was granted to Edmund James but was soon sold to John Andrews or Andros as it was sometimes written.

In 1656 Reana Daniels, probably wife of Robert Daniels, sold this lot to John Whitney, oldest son of John and Elinor Whitney the founders of the family in this country. In the inventory of his estate, 1692, it is stated that this dividend of 40-acres was bought of Mr. Andros. This might be explained by assuming that Reana was a daughter of heir of Andrews. This lot, one of many owned by Whitney was awarded to his sons John and Benjamin. They seem to have sold 10 acres on the east side to John Smith for, although no record of that transfer has been found, Smith in 1693 sold to his nephew John Stratton (Jr.) 10 acres of woodland lying between his own land and Whitney's. Stratton was a newly married man and we presume that he built here at about that time. He died in 1703 and his wife a year later leaving a family of young children. Her father, John Applin, settled the estate and seems to have sold the homestead, 10 acres with a house and barn, but no deed was recorded. Feb. 28, 1723-4 Joseph Waite of Weston sold 10 acres with a dwelling house, the description agreeing with that of the Stratton homestead, to David Whitney a young man with a wife and two children. He was a son of Benjamin Whitney and his father seems to have become sole owner of the balance of the lot for a year later he sold it, 30 acres, to David who thus became the owner of all of Lot 13.

By the above it will be seen that the first house on this lot must have been on the eastern side, part K-L-H-O, and that it was built about 1700, maybe a year or two before. Ensign David Whitney and his wife Rebecca had eight children their namesakes David and Rebecca being the oldest. They seem to have built a new house for when after the death of David, Sr. late in 1738 an inventory was made the house, which had two or more lower rooms a cellar and garret, was valued at £100. while the barn, "which is old" was considered to be worth only £15. The estate was settled in 1746 when the widow a third was awarded to the second son, Nathan, and the two-thirds to David, Jr. who eventually became possessor of the whole.

David Whitney, Jr. and his wife Mary had one son David and three daughters. He died in 1766 and by his will left the use of his whole estate to his wife until his son should be twenty-one when he was to have one-half and the balance after the death of his mother. He became of age in 1774 but died unmarried in less than two years.

Bezaleel Wright of Murrayfield, (Chester) Mass. who had married Sarah one of the daughters acquired possession and in 1777 they deeded it to William Wellington who had married another daughter, Mary, some eight years before. In this deed he is referred to as a victualler so he was probably running his father's tavern. The homestead was said to contain 52

acres indicating that the twelve acres missing from the Wellington Homestead had been joined to the Whitney farm.

In 1773 Thomas Wellington gave his son George a dwelling house and one acre of land, valued at £90, situated in Waltham and Lexington. It seems that Woburn Street was not then a public way for it is referred to as a lane connecting this house with the town way and passing through the land of Thomas Wellington. This house was probably on the east side of the lane and just south of the Lexington line. With this house and lot went the privilege of using the spring nearby. George moved to New Hampshire and in 1777 sold this place to his brother Samuel who in 1802 sold it to William. After this no further reference to this house has been found.

William Wellington was a prominent man in town affairs, being chosen selectman seventeen times. He bought many other lots of land in Waltham and Lexington, one of his properties was the tavern later known as the Central House which was bought by his son William, Jr. but was mortgaged to and later taken over by his father. This tavern stood on Main Street on the site now occupied by the Public Library. The house now standing on the old Whitney farm was built by William Wellington but the exact date of its erection has not been determined. The tax lists on file in the assessors department at the City Hall show that up to and including 1770 Thomas Wellington's tax upon his real estate was about 10% higher than that of his son William while in 1780 William's tax was about 80% higher than his father's. This seems to indicate that he built his new house in 1779 but of course this is not conclusive evidence.

In the Direct Tax of 1797 every house, occupant and owner is listed. From this valuable source of information we find that William Wellington's house and one acre of land was valued at \$1200. and that only three private houses and one tavern were assessed at a higher figure. These were the Lyman Mansion, now standing, \$8000. Gov. Gore's dwelling, burned a few years later and standing near the site of the present Gore Mansion, \$7000. The residence of Dea. William Brown, the predecessor of the Doty mansion, \$2600. The Green Tavern, owned by Zacheriah Weston but run by his son-in-law Joseph Nixon, standing on the south side of Main Street at Prospect Street, \$2500. The house Thomas Wellington was still standing, valued at only \$120 and occupied by Ephraim Peirce. A house and one acre valued and owned by Thomas Smith and owned by Samuel Wellington was valued at \$250. This was probably the one near the Lexington line east of Woburn Street.

In December 1809 the County Commissioners laid out Trapelo Road as a county highway from the Watertown line through Waltham and Lincoln to the Concord line. The road was widened and in most places the wall on the northern side was retained as the boundary. Some of the curves were straightened and we find that the new way crossed the old shortly before reaching the Wellington land and went in a straight line to a post at the corner of William Wellington's front yard. This left a triangular lot of  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre marked "Common" on the map.

William Wellington died in 1813 and the committee for the distribution of his estate gave very minute descriptions of the many lots of land that he owned. The names on the map were taken from these descriptions. North of the "Old barn lot" and probably extending over the Lexington line was a parcel called "Nat's mowing" while still further north were Nat's field"

and Nat's pasture". The identity of Nat has not been discovered. The "New house" mentioned was probably the one now occupied by Mr. Dean. This must have been built since the time of the Direct Tax, 1798, and of course before 1813.

The Whitney farm and some other lots was awarded to the widow for her dower. The Timothy Wellington farm in Lexington to son David and the new house and the "Grandfather Wellington homestead" to son Abraham. These two sons were then occupying the farms settled upon them. Sons Seth and Marshall were given most of the land on or near Main Street. Wellington Street passes through some of the land Included in Seth's share. Of the fourteen children in William Wellington's family twelve lived to maturity. Sons William, Charles and Darius, the latter a minor, declined any of the real estate.

In May 1833 Darius, being then about thirty-nine years old, bought the old farm from Abraham. The widow Mary died in December of that year, eighty-two years old, and the next spring the heirs quit-claimed the dower to Darius who thus became owner of all the land A-E-I-J besides much other land in Lexington. Three years later he sold the old farm to his nephew Isaac, appropriately the son of Abraham. Isaac died in 1847 and the administrator sold it back to Darius. Darius was the father of Charles Lowell Wellington the latest member of the family to own all this estate, but a portion is now (1986) owned by his son-in-law Sanford B. Castner.<sup>3</sup> The northern half of Lot 14 was in the possession of the family for about two hundred and seventy-five years.

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<sup>3</sup> An undecipherable half-sentence appears before the period, in parentheses, handwritten in the original manuscript. The entire portion of this passage ending "this estate,".