

Eastondale

Our town was originally part of the Taunton North Purchase bought from the Indians in 1668. The purchasers established a land company to divide the fifty square mile Purchase into 100 to 120 acre lots, but no official survey was made until 1695. By that time seven families of “squatters” had established themselves in South Easton and Eastondale. Six of these families came from Weymouth and the seventh came from Braintree.

Tradition holds that Clement Briggs was the first European to settle here, but, until recent research by Frank T. Mennino, Briggs was shrouded in mystery. We now know that he was born in Weymouth in 1670, months after his father died on November 7, 1669. The elder Briggs had two brothers, Thomas and Jonathan, both of whom were original purchasers in the Taunton North Purchase Company. In fact, in 1660 Thomas settled in what is now Mansfield eight years before the land was officially bought from the Indians. Clement’s mother, Hannah Packard Briggs, remarried, after her first husband’s death, to Thomas Randall of Weymouth. While Randall was the only father young Clement would know, it is easy to imagine that the boy spent time with his uncle Thomas on his farm near the future Mansfield-Easton town line. Young Briggs may have even been apprenticed or “farmed out” to his uncle. Clement may have tramped through the woods at his uncle’s, and this could explain his choice of settlement in the future Easton. Armed with a good inheritance, the twenty-four year old Briggs was certainly resident here by 1694. In that year he bought a full share in the Taunton North Purchase, but neglected to get the deed recorded. When he died sometime before June, 1720, his heirs found the deed so “defaced and damnified by the mice eating some part of it...that it was not fit to pass the records.” One may speculate that Briggs might actually have moved here when he reached the age of majority in 1691 or even before. It was not marriage that caused his settlement here because he did not marry until 1697.

Chaffin’s *History of Easton* hints that others of the original seven families also came in 1694 or even before, but no one has ever suggested anyone but Briggs as the original settler. A map of 1871 shows the site of Briggs’ home and indicates he was the first settler as does Chaffin’s *History of Easton* fifteen years later. This tradition probably came down through the family of Thomas Randall, Briggs’ stepfather. Chaffin’s genealogy of the Randall family indicates that Thomas Randall and his family moved to Easton in the autumn of 1695 while his earlier *History* claims that the family was “no doubt as early as 1694.” Whatever the case, descendants of the Randalls and the other earliest settlers were still in Easton in Chaffin’s time, and no one seems to have disputed Clement Briggs’ claim as our first settler.

Briggs’ youthful explorations led him to the ideal site for the town’s first settlement. He made his home east of the Old South Easton Green along the Queset River. The map of 1871 puts his home site on the north side of Depot Street just west of the junction with Pine Street. The other earliest families settled nearby on the South Easton side of our neighborhood boundary.

Water for household use and powering mills was a prime concern for settlers. Easton has five drainage systems in town. The far southwest corner of town is part of the Canoe River watershed, but it has played a tiny role in our history with only one small mill site. Just to the east of the Canoe River watershed is the Poquanticut River-Mulberry Brook

drainage, in the center of town is the Black Brook watershed, in the northeast and south is the Queset system, and in the extreme northeast is Dorchester Brook. Of these watershed only the Black Brook and Canoe River drainage systems were not a major source of power for Easton's Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century families.

Ultimately, the most heavily used of all the drainage systems was the Queset River. In Easton the Queset runs from Long Pond to Shovel Shop Pond then to Langwater Pond and finally through meadows under Route 138 and into West Bridgewater. The origin of the name is uncertain. Non-Eastoners have called it Cowisset, Coweset, and even Cohasset. Eastoners have called it Trout Hole Brook (in North Easton only), Sawmill River, Mill River, and Brummagen River. The present spelling standardized the earlier one, but the word is not Wampanoag or from the Cohannet subtribe that occupied this general area. The name probably comes from the Coweset River in Norton that people in Bridgewater erroneously believed was our river. Adding to the confusion are two other Indian sounding names which may somehow relate to the river. One is Cochesett, the name for the section of West Bridgewater along Route 106 at Easton's southeastern boundary. The other is the mysterious name of Sequasett. This name was applied to Eastondale by residents in the second half of the Nineteenth Century, if not earlier, but its origin is even more obscure than Queset.

There were apparently no Indians in Easton when the settlers arrived because of the devastation caused by King Philip's War in 1675-76. However, Briggs' Uncle Thomas in Mansfield may have become familiar with the natives and their settlements in the years before the war. Historians note only one Indian trail through Easton, the Bay Road, but if this were truly the only trail, then Clement Briggs would have more likely settled near his uncle somewhere on the Poquanticut River drainage. The Poquanticut was the second most intensively used by the early settlers, so it was perfectly acceptable for settlement. Almost certainly young Clement Briggs discovered other Indian trails following the route of present day Washington or Turnpike Streets with connections across town to Bay Road and to his uncle's in Mansfield. Following these trails he came to his future home site where Chaffin related, "There is a tradition that the Indians had a village on the spot...." He added that a "large number" of Indian relics had been plowed up at the site as well as at nearby Simpson Springs. The clearings left by the village and the Indian fields were attractive labor savers for the new settlers especially with the nearness of a powerful brook. Readers may ask why Briggs did not settle first in North Easton which had the best water power sites on the Queset. Chaffin's answer was that North Easton lacked Indian clearings because "not even an Indian would be foolish enough to attempt to clear the soil in the northeast quarter." It's noteworthy that there were many white settlers who were foolish enough to try farming in North Easton, but Clement Briggs was not one of them!

For Briggs, a final consideration may have been his home's proximity to Bridgewater where his mother's family lived. Certainly, Brigg's stepfather Thomas Randall was quick to exploit both the water and family resources located near Briggs' house. Randall, his son Thomas, Jr. and his brother-in-law Nathaniel Packard of Bridgewater built a sawmill a few rods northeast of the main building at Fernando's Garden Center (670 Washington Street). The sawmill, first mentioned in records in 1703, probably existed before 1700 because sawn lumber was a prime need for the first settlers. The mill stood on the north end of the Randall's dam. Once the dam was built, a more efficient overshot wheel could

be used to power the mill. After the death of Thomas Randall, the various shares in the mill passed through several hands including Clement Briggs' until Timothy Cooper came into full ownership before his death in 1726. This sawmill disappeared before 1771 because it does not appear in the tax valuation of that year.

A mill site on the south side of this dam was in use by 1713 when records note that Clement Briggs operated a grist mill there. Perhaps Randall and his stepson Briggs erected the dam as a family project to support both mills. At any rate, the main building of Fernando's Garden Center, the descendent of Briggs' mill, is the oldest continuously utilized business site in Easton. The Briggs grist mill probably used local stone not imported French burr stone to mill its grain. Local granite was suitable only for making cornmeal, but local sedimentary rocks might have been able to mill effectively European grains like rye or wheat.

Clement Briggs died before June, 1720 with a large estate valued at £700. After Briggs' death, his son Clement sold the mill to Timothy Cooper in February 1723. Thus, Cooper came into possession of both the sawmill and the grist mill. Timothy Cooper, who lived along what was to become Route 138 in South Easton, was a dark force in the early days of Easton. He explored much of the town and probably was the first to conceive the idea of controlling all the water rights along one of the town's rivers, but he was a grasping schemer and a rough character. When he was killed by his mill wheel in 1726, many saw it as a sign of divine providence.

The grist mill remained a permanent feature of the area when it passed into the hands of Timothy Cooper's son-in-law Ephraim Randall (stepbrother of Clement Briggs). Ownership stayed in the Randall family until 1803 when Ephraim's grandson moved to Wilton, Maine. The family had the original grist mill torn down in 1750, and carpenter Robert Ripley built a new one. This building, much added to and changed, is currently the main building at Fernando's.

The first settlers made do with footpaths and Indian trails for a few years, but they quickly recognized that improved roads would be a benefit (as long as the upkeep wasn't reflected in their tax bills!). The first road to be formally laid out in Eastondale roughly followed the present route of Turnpike Street from near its junction with Pine Street (about 220 Turnpike Street) and then turned up our Depot Street to the South Easton Green (the junction of Route 138). Pine Street was also laid out very early in Eastondale's history. It was first marked out in 1703 as a simple cart-path and formally became a road in December 1762.

As the neighborhood grew, so did use of the Queset River's water power. There are indications that another sawmill was in operation on the river by the 1750's. That mill was almost certainly over the line into what is now West Bridgewater. Later known as the Shoddy Mill site, it is on the east side of Turnpike Street just north of its junction with Depot Street. This is still the lowest spot in the area, and in the Eighteenth Century no road existed through this swamp. When the dam created a mill pond in the swamp, road making became even more difficult. Soon after 1800, Calvin Brett with others bought this mill privilege. The partners operated a fulling mill to process wool cloth. They also made satinet fabric. In later years Brett produced shoe pegs. The development of his site significantly affected plans to expand the original mill higher up the stream.

In 1803 Timothy Randall (grandson of Ephraim) sold the Clement Briggs mill site to Ichabod Macomber, who bought it for himself and partner, Cyrus Alger. Alger was in the

iron making business in town and later built the home that still stands at 133 Turnpike Street. He and his partners probably planned to enlarge the dam, build a forge or even a blast furnace, and make iron at the site. Calvin Brett and his partners blocked this move because they owned the downstream mill privilege previously mentioned and had bought land so near the old dam as to prevent enlargement of the pond. Eventually, this skillful move led to Brett and his partners buying the old mill site to add to their own.

In 1807 one of Brett's partners joined with members of the Howard family to form Elijah Howard and Company. Most of the members of these two partnerships were related. In 1809 after an expenditure of \$2,800, the new partners opened a forge behind the gristmill. Until 1810 the grist mill continued at its old site under the ownership of the Brett partnership, but in that year the partners sold out to Elijah Howard and Company.

The grist mill was a good investment, but the forge business did not prosper, eventually entailing a loss of \$2,000. In 1811 the firm lost a coal shed and coal worth \$1500 in a fire. Despite the losses in that year, the Elijah Howard Company began to make cut nails at this site to supplement production in their North Easton factory.

During the War of 1812 they also manufactured cotton yarn and cloth. According to Chaffin, Elijah Howard, Jr. was one of the earliest to make cotton cloth by power loom in this country. If he did, indeed, use power looms during the war, this rather audacious claim would be true. Samuel Slater had introduced cotton thread making machinery into America in 1793. Most thread mill owners supplemented their income by giving thread to home weavers and then buying their hand made cloth. However, Henry Cabot Lowell's idea of an integrated textile factory using power looms for weaving came to fruition only in 1815 after the War of 1812 ended. Despite their apparently innovative approach, the Howard partnership's losses by currency depreciation and bad debts left them bankrupt after the war. Inefficient production by primitive power looms also may have contributed to the failure.

The cut nail business continued in South Easton until 1823 when the company moved to Braintree. It continued to make cotton yarn, bed ticking, apron-check and other goods at South Easton until about 1840. This plant was called the Village Factory Company to distinguish it from the North Easton plant named the Federal Factory Company.

About 1840, Captain Barzillai Dean bought the South Easton plant and continued the manufacture of light cotton goods. Captain Dean operated the plant until his death in 1848. Afterwards, the water privilege, grist mill and cotton factory came into the possession of his son, Thomas H. Dean. Later another son, John O. Dean, became part owner.

The cotton and tack businesses ended before 1880. About that time the Ross Heel Company, a small business making wooden heels, started in the old factory. This business grew rapidly eventually employing fifty or more people, and several additions were built to the shop during this period. A screen making shop operated in a separate building on the site as well. J. E. Goss's bus company ran a route to bring workers from Brockton and many neighborhood people found employment with the Ross Heel Company as well. Thomas H. Dean maintained a machine shop in one portion of the Heel Company until his death. His business was continued by others until 1927.

According to Martin Johnson who grew up in Eastondale during this era, the Ross Heel Company finally failed due to two crucial losses. In 1924 Bernard Borg who was in charge of heel production for the owners, the Kennedy family of Washington Street, died

and was succeeded by George Newcomb. Shortly afterwards, a Kennedy daughter married a man called Sheldon Goodrich. Goodrich soon became factory superintendent replacing the popular James Driscoll. Driscoll had been responsible for getting most of the company's business, and after his firing he joined a shoe company in Philadelphia which had been Ross Heel's major buyer. The Philadelphia company began making its own wooden heels with Driscoll luring George Newcomb from Easton to help. Faced with this competition, the Ross Heel Company discontinued business in August 1929. The buildings were taken down in 1935.

While the factory site went through its changes, the grain business continued to be conducted under the name of T. H. and J. O. Dean. After Thomas H. Dean's death on October 2, 1892, John O. Dean acquired the entire property. After J. O. Dean's death, the business continued under family ownership. In 1921 the milling business together with a hay and coal business incorporated with the name of John O. Dean Company, Inc.. The company continued in operation at its original site as a feed and coal store until the late 1970's. Its successor, the Dean Oil Company, still does business just north of the original site with John Howard as its proprietor, a direct descendent of J.O. Dean.

The story of the mill's ownership seems complicated, but there was a remarkable consistency in its operation. Solomon Hayward of Foundry Street was the miller for some time before 1821. Next Jonathan Drake was the miller until about 1865. Then E. Minot Stone was miller for forty years before 1905. His home was on Depot Street, and he died in 1919. Dennis J. Brophy of Depot Street was the miller from 1910 until the company ceased grinding grain in the late twenties or early thirties.

The Shoddy Mill site was never as successful as its older neighbor. After Calvin Brett, it had several owners including the Morse family. The mill site found new uses as a carding mill, a sawmill, a cotton factory and finally as a shoddy mill. Shoddy was a fabric made from recycled lint. Many allegedly wool uniforms were made for Civil War soldiers with shoddy. When the uniforms got wet, they tended to fall apart at the seams thus giving the word shoddy its present meaning. Whether some of these uniforms were made on Turnpike Street is not known, but the Shoddy Mill did cease operation shortly after the Civil War. The building burned in 1879, and the dam, a wooden structure four or five feet high, finally gave out near the end of World War I. In 1974, Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Ray placed under conservation restriction 3.3 acres at the Shoddy Mill Site in Easton and West Bridgewater. Three years earlier the Rays had given three acres of wetlands on Queset Brook to the town.

The bustling businesses along the Queset formed the northern border of Eastondale, but Turnpike Street is the heart of the neighborhood. For the last century the road has marked one of the prettiest residential districts in Easton, but once there was as much bustle along the Turnpike as there was along the Queset.

As we have seen, part of what is now Turnpike Street was laid out before 1700. It remained a quiet country lane until the Taunton and South Boston Turnpike Company incorporated in 1806. One can still trace the route of this company's private road from the corner of High and North Main Streets in Randolph, where it joined the Blue Hill Turnpike, down Turnpike Street in Stoughton, Pearl Street in Brockton, Turnpike Street in Easton, and Broadway in Raynham and Taunton until it finally reaches Taunton Green. The road was completed in 1809 and despite the toll, "coaches, heavy teams, and other vehicles made the road lively, and taverns sprang up along the way."

At least one tavern still stands in Eastondale at 220 Turnpike Street. This substantial brick house opened for business in 1815. A brickyard a short distance north of the house near the river supplied the bricks. The tavern once had an ell extending east from the main house with sheds in the first story and living quarters above. After turnpike days had passed, the ell was moved and used for other purposes before finally being torn down. The tavern's barn stood across the road.

The section of road in Easton was particularly troublesome. Almost a mile of it went through the Great Cedar Swamp on the border with Raynham. The builders found that solid bottom was as much as 30 feet below the swamp surface. In Eastondale the road makers had to build a causeway over the mill pond at the Shoddy Mill site. The turnpike was 21.5 miles long and cost \$34,434.61 or about \$1600 per mile. Regardless of the stories of heavy traffic, the road never returned very much to its investors. The turnpike became a public road in 1851.

One reason for the death of the first turnpikes was the start of the railroad age. Although the railroad came to North Easton in 1855, it was 1888 before the Old Colony Railroad extended its line from Easton Center through Eastondale to West Bridgewater, Matfield, and Brockton. The rail line crossed Washington Street north of the Simpson Spring access road. It was here that the small South Easton Station was located. The original 1888 station stood until it was hit by a train and replaced in 1920. Past the station the track swung in a sharp circle south crossing Pine Street and High Street before finally cutting across Turnpike Street at a sharp angle. The Eastondale Station was on the west side of Turnpike Street south of High Street, and the freight house was on the east side of the road a short distance south of the passenger station. The line was particularly important for the neighborhood because it enabled people to work in the Brockton shoe factories while maintaining a rural life at home.

Before the 1890's public transportation was also handled by E. N. Fisher and his two horse coach which could hold about twenty passengers. Fisher, whose house still stands at 147 Turnpike Street, kept his coach in the barn of his partner Guilford White. Fisher also was the mail carrier for the district.

Beginning in 1897 Eastondale also had trolley transportation. The Taunton and Brockton Street Railroad ran down Washington Street and then turned east on Depot Street. It then paralleled Turnpike Street along the edge of the swamp to Raynham. Where it crossed the railroad, the New York, New Haven and Hartford built a bridge to raise their trains above the trolley. Trolley service stopped along this route in the early 1930's. The railroad replaced the bridge with normal track in 1939 despite the fact that rail service on the line had ceased in the 1920's.

Between the demise of the Turnpike and the arrival of the railroad and trolleys, Eastondale continued to develop. There were several small shoe shops along Turnpike and Pine Streets during the 1800's. In 1819, a schoolhouse was built at the junction of Turnpike and Washington Street. This school later became known as the Goward School. In 1869 the original building was moved a quarter of a mile south on Turnpike Street and became the home of Luther Blood. A new schoolhouse was built on the original lot. This was in use until September 1924 when students began to be transported to the South Easton Grammar School. The 1869 building still stood in 1936, but now only the foundation remains. Before it was finally torn down, the abandoned building caused a little trouble in the neighborhood. It was set afire several times, but true to their duty the

fire fighters saved a part of the building each time although each time their enthusiasm for the task dwindled. Ed White recalls that during the last fire the State Fire Inspector appeared while the fire was still burning and ordered the firemen to extinguish it!

The new arrangement of sending students to the South Easton School was not successful; that building became so crowded sixth grade students had to be bused to North Easton. Thus, in 1930 a new neighborhood grammar school opened on Pine Street in Eastondale. This building continued in use until 1981.

In the mid-Nineteenth Century White's Hall, located at the corner of Hill and Turnpike Streets, became a neighborhood center. The hall was probably built by Alanson White or his son Guilford. Guilford personally ran a shoe making business in the basement of the hall from 1850 to 1856 before becoming a prominent lawyer in the federal courts. Shoe making apparently continued in the building for some time. White's home still stands at 113 Turnpike Street. The White family was so important in neighborhood affairs that Eastondale was known as White's Village for much of the Nineteenth Century. Today, the most remarkable contribution of the White family to the neighborhood is the house at 122 Turnpike Street. Probably built by Guilford's brother Alanson, Jr., it is one of the very best examples of vernacular Gothic Revival architecture in Easton.

For a century and a half Eastondale residents worshipped outside the neighborhood. The earliest settlers had their spiritual needs provided for by the first meeting house and burial ground on Church Street. When the Congregational Church moved to Easton Center in the 1750's, Eastondale residents had the choice of walking or driving their wagons there or attending the short-lived dissenting Presbyterian meeting house at South Easton Green. When that short-lived church failed, neighborhood residents again had to travel outside the neighborhood for services.

Religious services finally arrived in the neighborhood in 1854 when several spiritualist lectures were held at White's Hall attracting wide attention throughout town. The First Spiritual Society of Easton was organized there in 1872. Meetings of this group were held at the Easton Unitarian Church in the afternoon and at White's Hall in the evening, but the meetings only continued for a short time. The last public meeting of spiritualists in Easton took place at the hall on March 31, 1880, as a celebration of the thirty-second anniversary of the birth of modern spiritualism. Five hundred persons attended this meeting which included a lecture, music, dancing, and a free supper.

White's Hall was also the home for the Civil War veterans organization, the Grand Army of the Republic. The GAR met there for about five years until White's Hall burned in August 1884. The GAR then built their own building at the corner of Hill and Turnpike Streets which opened in 1886. This group, the first veteran's organization, was very active. Its annual winter fair became a popular attraction for young and old. The Eastondale Community Club, about which little is known today, and the Laurel Club, organized in 1918 by Eastondale and South Easton women, also met in the building. The Laurel Club started to knit for the Red Cross, but after World War I its members did hospital work for veterans and visited shut-ins. The club also gave a scholarship. Many plays, minstrel shows and dances were held at the Hall until it was torn down in 1946.

Neighborhood Unitarians who had been left without a church building when the First Congregational Church at the Center burned in 1886 also used the GAR building. This church group, like the Evangelical Congregational Church at the Center and the

Unitarians of North Easton, could trace its lineage to the original church founded in Easton about 1713. About 1890 a group of Eastondale families began holding Unitarian services with visiting ministers in the GAR Hall. They also established a Sunday School.

By 1904 this congregation had grown large enough to build a church. This church had its own ministers until about 1919. After that, the minister of North Easton's Unity Church acted as pastor in Eastondale although the two churches maintained a separate identity. In 1965 services ceased, and ownership of the church was given to the Unitarian Universalist Association which refurbished the building for office space. The Association occupied the building for only a few years. After briefly serving as the headquarters of the New England Baptist Temple, the church became a private dwelling (132 Turnpike Street).

Around the turn of the Twentieth Century Eastondale had an industry that was an important aid to religious services. This was the Williams Organ Company which was operated by Willie and George Williams. Not much is known of this interesting company, but they built the organ in the Immaculate Conception Church in North Easton. According to Martin Johnson, their factory "was located on the west side of Turnpike Street just north of J. E. Howard's store." The factory "set back from the road about 500 feet" with a house just in front of it.

Easton has many burial grounds, and the Eastondale neighborhood is no exception. Traditionally, the proliferation of cemeteries has been attributed to an early law that forbade the bringing of a person who had died of a contagious disease by a healthy home. In fact, many cemeteries began and grew because persons wanted to be buried at home with the family. This seems to be true for Eastondale's cemeteries. In 1818, Nehemiah Howard established a private family burial ground on Turnpike Street near his home. In 1831 Asaph Howard (1809-1872) set apart a small graveyard on the west side of Pine Street a little south of High Street. This lot contained ten marked graves and three or four unmarked ones. One of the unmarked ones belonged to Thomas Dunbar known "far and near as 'the old fifer'" who was called into service in the War of 1812. About 1930 the whole cemetery was moved to the northwest corner of the South Easton Cemetery. Three of the old stones were re-erected and the Howards put in a modern granite stone for Asaph and James M. Howard's families and for Thomas Dunbar as well. A house was built on the original cemetery site.

Easton has almost as many named corners as cemeteries and Eastondale again is no exception. The house of the Nehemiah Howard mentioned in the previous paragraph stood on the northeast corner of Purchase and Turnpike Streets south of his cemetery. That house later became the home of the Goward family, and the intersection there has long been known as Goward's Corner. As early as 1800 the First Social Library, Easton's first private library association, was organized at the Roland Howard house on the southeast side of this corner. In keeping with the rural nature of the area the library's holdings were mostly farming books with a scattering of religious texts.

Another named intersection is Lothrop's Corner at the junction of Depot and Turnpike Streets. The house at 49 Turnpike Street on the southeast side of the intersection was built by the Lothrop family in 1827. The family remained there until near the turn of the Twentieth Century.

Chaffin also tells an interesting tale regarding the 1840 election and "Asa Howard's Corner", probably the intersection of Hill and Pine Streets. The election of 1840 was

hotly contested in Easton with Oliver Ames leading the Whig supporters of General William Henry Harrison. Ames and the other Whigs organized a procession to a Fourth of July celebration in Bridgewater. "The old stage driver, John Taylor, drove an omnibus with six horses gayly decked with flags." About a hundred carriages followed in a parade that stretched for a mile. When they got to Asa Howard's corner, "a squad of Democrats stood on the opposite side of the road with an effigy of Harrison dressed as an old woman, in red petticoats." The Democrats called Harrison, one of the oldest men ever to run for the office of President, "the old granny candidate." Harrison was elected but died after about a month in office; one of the most lasting effects of his presidency was a vow made by the thirty-four year old Oakes Ames. He pledged to give up chewing tobacco if Harrison was elected. He kept the pledge for over thirty years although he did replace tobacco by chewing chamomile flowers.

The United States government confirmed Eastondale's status as a major neighborhood when it decided to establish a post office in the district in 1889. The original site for the post office, shown on an 1895 map, was probably the J. M. Howard Store. The post office moved to a small building in the railroad station yard in the late 1890's. Sometime before 1930 the Post Office returned to the J. M. Howard and Son Store with James E. Howard as Postmaster. The old post office building in the station yard was moved to Pine Street and used as an ell on the house occupied by Dennis C. Brophy [perhaps 28 Pine Street]. The postmastership passed through several hands before the office was closed in 1972. Herbert DeCouto, the last Eastondale Postmaster, became the Postmaster at North Easton.

James M. Howard was the son of Asaph Howard, and his general store was a neighborhood institution for three generations. In the days before supermarkets this general store offered grain, lumber, kerosene and household necessities as well as food. Martin Johnson notes that after the arrival of the horseless carriage, the Howards also sold gasoline. "This had to be one of the first self-serves. They had one pump out front and most people helped themselves."

At first, Howard ran a store in his house on Pine Street, but by 1871 he had purchased a two and a half story structure that may have begun its life as a shoe shop in the 1850's. The second story was used as a residence by family members. Howard's lumber yard was at the railroad siding southwest of the store and an one-story addition to the store stretched in that direction. The original store burnt on the evening of October 5, 1930 and was replaced by the current building which opened for business in March of 1931. From October to March the family did business in the three-family dwelling which still stands behind the store; the post office was located at the far left of the temporary location. This tenement had been built as a shoe factory by the Howards after the original store had been changed over from shoemaking. It was made into a tenement in 1888. After the fire, the Howards closed the lumberyard.

James Elliot (Ellie) Howard ran the store after his father. Ellie Howard also owned a private water company providing water to Pine and Turnpike Streets from about 1911 to 1914. Today, the second Howard store (77 Turnpike Street) is a music business called Rhapsody.

Another store in the neighborhood was Garcia's Store which was located in the building that is now the home of Especially Yours Florist (670 Washington Street). Unlike Howard's Store which was a true neighborhood institution, Garcia's benefitted

from its location on Route 138. It survived for many years after World War II.

Easton had a unique government structure in the earlier part of this century and this affected the Eastondale neighborhoods. Because of the dispersed nature of the town, neighborhoods were allowed to incorporate as districts to provide special services like police, fire protection, and water. The South Easton/Eastondale district was the second one in town when it began in 1915 as a fire and water district. The district connected with the Brockton water system with pipes costing \$4500 per mile. Fire equipment was housed at the corner of Depot and Washington Streets in a private barn owned by John B. Howard. The district system caused intense neighborhood rivalries that adversely affected the town. The system began to fade in 1932 when a Town Fire Chief was appointed. In an agreement reached in 1934, the South Easton Village District built the current fire house on Depot Street with the help of the WPA and turned over its equipment to the Town. The neighborhood continued to have a separate water district until 1958.

Despite modern innovations, the neighborhood retained some of its rural character into the Twentieth Century. Even today a small farm raises beautiful miniature goats. Earlier, poultry farming was popular on several farms like Southworth's on Pine Street or at Staples Duck Farm also in Eastondale. The most interesting of these farms was Farrar's Grapevine Farm located at about the site of the current Diplomat Restaurant (304 Turnpike Street). Under the management of Brooks Farrar, the old farm supported Farrar's Farm Wayside Stand and Dining Room from the 1920's into the early 1940's.

Mr. Farrar seems to have been a true believer in the benefits of ducks over all other forms of meat. He could have given Frank Perdue, the chicken king, a run for his money in the promotion business, so let him describe his operation:

We raise, here, around 30,000 ten to twelve week old ducklings each year, and, by selecting our breeders every four months, we are enabled to produce them the year around, thereby assuring you absolutely fresh meat every day in the year. Everyone knows that freshly dressed poultry has a decidedly superior, delicious flavor.

The caloric content of Duckling is nearly twice that of chickens (although the average price of chicken exceeds that of duckling over ten cents per pound) and it also exceeds that of the choicest cuts of meat.

Ducklings when ready for market are not over twelve weeks old, weighing from five to seven pounds. They make more rapid growth than any other edible meat, poultry or animal. This extraordinary growth assures extreme tenderness making roast duckling fairly melt in your mouth.

The tremendous increase in consumption proves Duckling to be the most nutritious, delicious—in fact the most delightful and appetizing—meat it is possible to buy. After one has tried roast Duckling once, in almost every case the desire for more increases from time to time.

There is another very important point in favor of duckling, and that is, they are absolutely free from any disease that is common in poultry, animals, or human beings.

Scientific figures show that if anyone bought \$50 worth of ducklings; the same amount of both chicken and fish—they could live more comfortably 22 days longer on duckling than they could on chicken, and 7 days longer than on fish that retails for 10 cents per pound. Can you beat that?

This proves to the public that DUCKLINGS ARE NOT TOO EXPENSIVE TO EAT; in fact—they are cheaper than any meat in life-giving food value.

If one had the desire to sample this wonder food, Farrar's dining room offered food "prepared, cooked and served here by the best neighborhood housewife cooks, who are

proud of their skill.” In 1936 creamed duck was available for 75¢, duck soup (presumably without the Marx brothers) was 15¢, a duck liver sandwich went for 25¢ and a whole roast duck dinner cost \$2.00. Farrar also raised and cooked chickens. A ham and egg sandwich could be had for 20¢. For those who had never heard of dieting, Farrar promoted a picnic lunch of hot roast duckling, a loaf of bread, potato chips and hot coffee (for which he would loan a thermos). Moxie was prominent among the beverage options. Changing tastes and competition from larger companies further south ended the duck business in South Easton, but Farrar’s idea of a “neighborhood housewife” cooked meal of the “most delightful and appetizing meat it is possible to buy” lingers on the palate even for those who never had a duck liver sandwich at his wayside stand.

The diners of the town did not have long to mourn the demise of Mr. Farrar’s restaurant because in the late 1940’s Robert “Red” McAfee moved his popular restaurant, Merrymac’s, from a smaller building near Dailey’s Corner to this site. Merrymac’s was a popular restaurant and function room until about 5:30 P.M. on January 23, 1966. At that time a flare up from a kitchen grease fire caused the diners to flee into the night. The spectacular fire caused minor injuries to three firefighters and an estimated half a million dollar loss. Some diners had to be driven home by the police after they discovered their car keys had been left in the burning building. Merrymac’s did not rise from the ashes of the fire, but the current Diplomat eventually did make use of the site.

Today, Eastondale is a beautiful neighborhood whose air of quiet country seclusion belies the bustle that once dominated it. The streetscape blends mature trees and an outstanding mix of historic and modern homes to attract the eye, but the passerby should remember that it was the obscure Queset River that made this neighborhood the birthplace of Easton.