

North Easton

Any tourist who comes to North Easton gets bombarded with stories of the beautiful buildings donated by this or that member of the Ames Family. This emphasis on the aesthetic side of this remarkable family often obscures the essential points of the Ames story. First, old Oliver Ames came to Easton and, with unmatched grit and determination in the face of great difficulties, built a business that ultimately made three-fifths of the world's shovels. Next, two of his sons, Oakes and Oliver, raised in little North Easton village, boldly envisioned and then built a railroad that stretched across an untamed continent. Finally, in an age of brutal labor disputes, the Ames Company went through four generations, four major depressions and three waves of immigrants without having a strike for wages. What attracted this family here and what changes they wrought is the story of North Easton village, but to understand that story we must first tell of the precursors of Oliver Ames.

Easton's earliest residents quickly spread north from Eastondale along what was to become Washington Street. North Easton's two earliest residents were farmers who did not immediately exploit the mill turning power of the Queset River. The neighborhood's first settler, Nathaniel Manley, the third son of William Manley, probably came to Easton as early as 1694 with his father. Old William built his home in South Easton, but he and his three sons owned the western part of the future F. L. Ames estate in North Easton. Sometime before 1708 Nathaniel built on the family property just east of Langwater Pond about where the current house stands. Later, in 1716, Manley sold his property to James Leonard and moved to Unionville.

North Easton's second settler, Joseph Crossman, came here in 1713 and lived about where Hilliard's candy store is now. Crossman became an elder of the Congregational Church and served as Town Treasurer for one year. He died in 1776.

Also in 1713, Isaac Leonard became the first settler in the heart of North Easton Village. He located on what is now the "Island" between Shovel-Shop and Langwater Ponds although neither pond existed then. All the early Leonards in this area descend from a family brought to Saugus in the early Seventeenth Century to work in the ironworks there. True to his family's heritage, Isaac Leonard was the first to discover bog iron ore in Easton. In 1726 he sold his house, land, and iron ore to Eliphalet Leonard, the father of industrial North Easton.

On the west side of the neighborhood Thomas Manley, Jr., the grandson of William Manley, kept an inn on the south side of what is now Lincoln Street to the east end of what was Flyaway Pond. He was there perhaps as early as 1730 or even before. All the houses just mentioned have disappeared.

Today, the oldest house still standing in this neighborhood may be the former Bears and Blossoms Shop [now A Wild Rose] at 56 Main Street next to the telephone building. However, Chaffin always asserted that the oldest house in the village was the Leonard homestead at 46 Pond Street. Still, research by Dorothy and Paul Berry has traced the Main Street home back to the 1730's. The Randall family had started the second or third sawmill in town west of Main Street and north of the library sometime between 1711 and 1728. Perhaps they also built the old house. The Randalls later added a gristmill on the same dam.

Houses in early North Easton were widely scattered, but the road network was slow to develop. Many of today's roads in the neighborhood existed only as footpaths for

many years before formally becoming town highways. Main Street became an official road only in 1744. It ran from Joseph Crossman's through the village and nearly to the Stoughton line. The section north of the Village never developed into an important road because of the rise of Canton Street. In 1747 George Ferguson settled in the Canton Street area. Sixteen years later the cart path from his home to Main Street became an official street. The Town extended Canton Street to Stoughton in 1772.

The slow development of North Easton was probably due to its poor soil, but even in its early years some persons realized its potential for industrial development. The first of these visionaries was Captain James Leonard. Between 1716 and 1723 he built the dam which created Stone's Pond (also called Fred's Pond and now known as Langwater Pond). This is the dam crossed by Main Street as one heads towards Washington Street. Leonard erected a forge on the dam to process bog iron ore. Called Brummagem Forge, its name was a corruption of Birmingham, the English iron center. Captain Leonard's son, Eliphalet, managed the forge business from its start. He became an important leader who represented the interests of the North Easton neighborhood in town affairs.

Eliphalet Leonard's family continued to make iron in North Easton until the early Nineteenth Century. In 1792 or 1793 his grandson, also called Eliphalet, built the dam that made Shovel-Shop Pond and opened a nail making factory. This grandson built his home at 46 Pond Street across from the "Island". Traditionally, this was the first painted house in North Easton although today it has unpainted shingles.

The early development of the iron and water resources of North Easton was the work of the Leonard family. Iron and water power plus relatively good access to the Boston market was what made our town so attractive to the twenty-three year old Oliver Ames (1779-1863). Like the Leonards, the Ames family came to America in the early Seventeenth Century to work in the iron industry. Oliver Ames' father, John (1738-1803), began the manufacture of shovels in West Bridgewater just before the start of the Revolution. John also apprenticed his oldest son David to Hugh Orr, a leading iron founder who produced muskets and cannons during the Revolution. Oliver Ames, Sr. was the youngest of John's ten children. Oliver learned to read and cipher in the common schools of West Bridgewater, and he learned the shovel making trade from his father and perhaps Captain Joshua Stetson, a shovel and hoe maker from Walpole. Finally, just before coming to Easton, he worked for his older brother David who had become the first Superintendent of the Springfield Armory. Thus, by 1803 the youthful Ames was the best prepared of the many men who would try to turn North Easton into a modern industrial neighborhood. He combined both fierce determination and the best technical training available.

By 1803 Eliphalet Leonard's nail works was bankrupt. On August 1, with the help of brother David, Oliver bought Leonard's forge, nail-making shop, dwelling house and several pieces of land near Shovel Shop Dam for \$1600. Ames converted the forge to making shovel blades and the nail shop to making shovel and hoe handles. What was to become the famous Ames bend in the shovel's handle was perfected in the shop after soaking the handles in the pond. For the first two years of operation Mr. Ames carted his own shovels to Boston and Newport, Rhode Island for sale. Finances were tight. One source notes that he often could only afford raw material for a dozen shovels which he would make and sell to raise money to buy more stock. Only his energy and his belief in the superiority of his product kept him going.

As his business grew, Ames moved quickly to control the power of the Queset River which drops about 50 feet in its mile long run through North Easton. Four dams existed above Ames' Shovel Shop dam. In 1813 Ames' first acquisition among these was the old Randall dam mentioned earlier.

George Ferguson had built the second oldest dam on the upper Queset at the end of Picker Lane before 1759. Here Ferguson and others ran a sawmill until shortly before 1815. At that point Colonel David Manley, with some investment from Oliver Ames and Asa Waters, began to make cut nails there. The unlucky Manley lost this factory and a large stock of new nails in a fire. The nail factory was rebuilt, but ultimately around 1832 this mill privilege came under Ames' control.

Colonel David Manley is an interesting character in his own right. Since new information about him has just been uncovered, we will note it here. Manley, like Oliver Ames, was part of a group of active men who realized the potential of Easton's water power for the new Industrial Revolution. Although Ames ultimately rose above these early competitors, David Manley, an Easton native, was extremely popular here as his elected rank as a Lieutenant Colonel in the militia shows. According to a letter found in Chaffin's Manley file, when the nail factory burned,

The Colonel commenced business in Boston selling and buying old iron. When he returned to Easton [he] said he had 27 dollars and owed no man a cent and felt the richest he ever did in his life.

The date of this Boston sojourn is not known, but it apparently didn't last too long. In 1815 Manley opened the Easton Manufacturing Company in partnership with Oliver Ames and others. This factory was on the site of the later Ames Machine Shop in the Shovel Shop complex across the street from the Library. According to Chaffin's *History* Manley and his partners aimed to make cotton cloth by machine something that Chaffin claimed Elijah Howard's partnership had already accomplished. On the other hand, Chaffin's Manley informant noted that the Colonel "began [in the cotton business] before there was [sic] looms or pickers by water." What does this seeming contradiction mean?

Francis Cabot Lowell and Paul Moody had created the first American power loom in 1814 for Lowell's Boston Manufacturing Company, but a really practical power loom only began to gain acceptance after 1817. Therefore, Manley's company only mechanized the middle two steps in the cotton cloth making process. Manley's company apparently did the initial step of picking the dirt from the cotton by hand. Today Picker Lane and Field bear the name of a later picking machine installed by E. J. W. Morse at the old Ferguson dam about 1835. In 1815 Manley, with Ames' help, installed machines at his factory that straightened the fibers of the clean cotton in a process called carding. Other machines spun the finished thread. Finally, Manley organized the weavers of Easton to make the cloth on hand looms at home. He supplied them with thread and then bought their finished product. This practice was common in Rhode Island after Samuel Slater introduced water powered cotton thread making machines in 1793, but this is the first hint of evidence that this "putting-out" system existed in Easton. Manley probably paid for the finished cloth with credit at his company store which he opened at the same time as his factory. The store sold alcohol and quickly became a social center for the men of the village.

According to Neubert Morse, Manley's firm eventually owned a sawmill, grist mill and a second factory building. Unfortunately, the Easton Manufacturing Company was

destined to fail. Another fire struck early in the company's history, but Manley rebuilt. Later, in an apparent effort to expand production, he joined forces with a Boston firm which went broke with debts of \$40,000 in Manley's name. He was let off by paying \$10,000, but it ruined his business. Shepard Leach took over the property which was subsequently acquired by Oakes Ames. The Ameses continued the operation of Manley's store, but ended the sale of alcohol there.

Sadly, Manley's business failure also affected his family. The Colonel had promised each of his sons a \$1000 or a college education as a way to get their start in life. The oldest boy took the money and the second son went to Harvard, but the two youngest boys got nothing.

Manley's third son, William, was a childhood friend of Oliver Ames, Junior, and shared the young Ames boys' passion for wrestling. In a reminiscent letter Oliver Ames, Jr., now burdened with the operation of the Ames Company, recalled for Manley the joys of their youth including the "awful wrestling grip" that Manley learned while visiting Saco, Maine.

Wrestling was probably this era's best loved pastime. Even old Oliver Ames was an active participant well into middle age and had a statewide reputation for never being thrown. The story is told that Horatio, old Oliver's third and largest son at six feet six inches and about three hundred pounds, was the town's champion. The old man still thought he was the best wrestler, and challenged his son to a secret match in the woods despite being outweighed by almost a hundred pounds. The match took place, but neither father nor son ever revealed the results. However, from that day a distance grew between the two, and Horatio eventually left town to seek his fortune in Connecticut.

Young William Manley earned his page in Easton lore when one day he filled the water pitcher at his father's store with gin. The clientele, thinking they were diluting their drinks, in actuality became so intoxicated they had to be carried home. A North Bridgewater native was brought home stretched out on his wood cart. Thus, the Manley store can claim the first recorded use of the designated driver in Easton's history! (Most drunks in the horse drawn era trusted to their animal to find the way home!) The mischievous William later travelled to Montreal and worked in the nailmaking trade before becoming a civil engineer building railroads in the Midwest.

Some of William's friends also ran into trouble in the family store as well. Colonel Manley kept a box filled with expensive lump sugar near where the hot rum toddys were made, but young North Eastoners took to stealing the sugar. One day Colonel Manley substituted lumps of potash, and one taste of the bitter substance cured the thieves!

Colonel David eventually left Easton and died in 1845 near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. When we applaud the success of the Ames family, it is good to remember that one misstep by old Oliver might have driven that family into financial ruin as well. Only the exceptional business ability and dynamic character of Oliver Ames prevented disaster.

Returning to our survey of the dams along the upper Queset, we learn that the next oldest dam is Long Pond dam built in 1763 by Stoughton people. In May 1825 Ames joined a consortium of men with mills along the Queset who enlarged the Long Pond Dam to provide a more regular flow of water. Ames also built another hammer shop at the dam.

The enlargement of Long Pond Dam marked another watershed for old Oliver Ames.

In keeping with the custom of the time, Ames supplied a daily rum ration to the workers at the dam. Shortly thereafter in keeping with the new trend toward temperance, Ames began to serve switchel to the men who did his farm labor. Switchel was a mix of molasses, water, a little ginger and “a little vinegar to give it a tang.”

Next downstream from the Ferguson Dam, behind what is now the Village Cemetery, was the youngest of the four dams above Shovel Shop Pond. In 1804 Nathan Pratt, a blacksmith and friend of Oliver Ames, bought land and a mill privilege on the Queset from Jacob Leonard and George Ferguson. Within a year Pratt had erected the Hoe Shop Dam where he built a trip hammer to make hoes. In 1814 Oliver Ames bought the hammer and the dam and turned it to Shovel Company business. Pratt then opened a blacksmith shop nearby which according to Chaffin became “a delightful resort for young children, who felt at home with the good natured blacksmith, and had rare fun in his shop.”

According to Company records, Ames instituted a rigid plan to maintain his dams. Not only did he depend on them for his livelihood, they needed constant vigilance to prevent a disastrous flood which could destroy homes and factories as far away as West Bridgewater. Even the best efforts of the Ames Company could not prevent one disaster. On February 12, 1886, hours of heavy rain on the frozen ground weakened the dam at Long Pond. Despite Herculean efforts that saved the dam, a large flow of water rushed through town washing out a section of railroad track off Elm Street. The flood then moved to South Easton where it knocked out the bridge on Central Street, inundated Washington Street near today’s Dean Gas Station, and finally ripped out a thirty foot wide section of Turnpike Street.

While Ames’ plan to “corner” North Easton’s water power for his expanding shovel works was clear, the rest of his business life during his first decade in Easton seems extremely unfocused. When his father died in 1805, Oliver took over the forge in West Bridgewater. In 1807 Oliver Ames and his business friend, blacksmith Nathan Pratt, moved to Plymouth where for seven years Ames supervised the shovel-making division of the Plymouth Iron Works. Oliver Ames also manufactured cotton spinning machinery and other machines at the Plymouth Works. Ames continued the shovel-making plants at North Easton and West Bridgewater as well. Asa Waters managed the shovel making in North Easton and ran a hoe shop in partnership with Ames. In 1809 the firm added two new flumes at North Easton, and replaced the hammer harnesses. About the same time Ames patented a method for the giant trip hammers “to go over the shafts”, perhaps a way to increase the force of the hammer’s blow. Ames could handle his widespread enterprises because the era before 1815 was a boom time which did not require particularly careful management.

The Plymouth Iron Works closed in 1814, and Oliver Ames returned to North Easton permanently. The previous year he had purchased the land around the old Randall Dam where he began to build a new home. Before this time his family had lived in Eliphalet Leonard’s house (46 Pond Street) where his oldest son, the future Congressman Oakes Ames (1804-1873), was born.

With the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 came depression and English shovels that provided stiff competition for the improved Ames models. By getting long lines of credit based on his strong character, Oliver Ames weathered the financial storm caused by the end of the war. Also helping during this fiscal crisis was the Ames Company Store

that provided general supplies for the neighborhood. The first company store probably is now the home at 92 Main Street.

The Company Store existed well into the Twentieth Century. A 1925 *Brockton Enterprise* article reveals the following which combines information about the first and second stores:

During the War of 1812 the soldiers drilled in the second floor of the store and during the Civil War it was the headquarters for the northern soldiers. One of the first regiments to leave the North...during the Civil War was from this building.

Over 100 years ago it was the trading post for miles around. All the farmers came here to exchange their goods. The late General Tom Thumb of Middleborough also appeared in the hall years ago and the hall was used for dancing parties for over seventy years.

...Several of the oldest families in town have accounts in the store yet, where they have traded for over 95 years.... The building is in a good state of preservation, and it is three and a half stories high.... The store, now the property of Frank McMenemy [father of the late Unionville hamburger king], was purchased about a year ago. Mr. McMenemy employs about ten clerks and keeps in supply over 9200 items. He keeps a complete line of everything.

In 1821 production at the Ames Company reached 370 dozen shovels. Even that relatively modest amount began to tax the available water supply in North Easton, so in 1823 Ames built a dam and shop in South Braintree to supplement the Easton plant. As mentioned earlier, Long Pond Dam was expanded in 1825 to provide more water for the North Easton works.

The demand for workers also began to increase. Up to this point, Ames had hired men from the same Yankee stock from which he came. The stereotype of the Yankee as a hard-working, well-educated, sober church goer became the ideal for all Ames workers. In later years most of the second and third generations of the Ames family directed their philanthropy towards the support of schools, churches, and temperance groups for new immigrants and old Yankees alike.

The first trickle of new immigrants, the Irish, began to arrive in the 1820's. At the same time, the increase in the number of steady workers on Company records indicates an influx of people living in the neighborhood. Between 1830 and 1852 the Ames Company grew only by employing more workers because the water power of the area was completely utilized except for that at the south end of Langwater Pond.

During the 1820's orders for shovels came from Boston, Providence, Virginia, and New York presumably for the Erie Canal. Shovels were traded for coal in the Lehigh Valley of Pennsylvania. By the late 1820's the market had expanded even farther into the Midwest along the now completed Erie Canal and along the coast as far south as New Orleans. In the first half of 1832 production reached 4,297 dozen shovels. The construction of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad provided a new market for shovels and opened new territory for Ames salesmen. With the threat of English competition behind him, Ames used brand name recognition and excellent quality to get a relatively high price for his shovels. Even the 1826 failure of the Easton Manufacturing Company, Ames' joint venture with David Manley, did not damage the company's growth.

The shovel shops were not yet at the center of the growing neighborhood, but instead they huddled around the various dams on the Queset River. The present location of the shovel shops, now the backbone of the village, consisted of a small general store run by Ames, Manley's factory which was utilized for a variety of enterprises before the Ames

Company finally bought it in 1851, and a few other houses and shops along Main Street. Across the street, north of the future site of the library, were the large houses of Oliver, Senior (shared with his son Oakes) and that of Oliver, Junior (1807-1877). There was no church in the village proper until the mid-1840's. In 1797 a small district school, North Easton's second, was built up the street from the future site of the Ames' homes. The original 1783 school house stood near Unity Church; it is now a home at 92 North Main Street.

By 1837 Ames employed eighty-four workmen. In the following year Ames opened a boarding house across the street from the future site of the Historical Society headquarters. During the late 1830's and 1840's Irish immigrants came in greater numbers. Many lived in the Ames Boarding House or Ames owned housing before moving to homes of their own later in the century.

The Boarding House was the site of some amazing scenes. Once, word came to Oakes Ames that two Irish workers were brawling in the Boarding House. The broad shouldered Ames rushed to the scene, pulled the battlers apart, and gave them a good shaking before returning to his office. Even more remarkable was the story of two Easton natives:

A misbehaving man and woman were dragged out of the Boarding House by a small mob of incensed people, and half dressed were ridden each on a rail about the square. Their usage was so rough that the death of the man was caused or at least hastened by it.

The growth of the neighborhood brought an end to one long time problem. Before 1839 mail coaches completely bypassed North Easton. One line of mail coaches ran down Bay Road and the other ran along what is now Washington Street. Neighborhood residents left their mail in a large box at Dailey's Corner (Washington and Main Streets) where the coaches dropped off and picked up the mail. This system led to much confusion. As a result, John Ames, 2nd became the first North Easton Postmaster on June 20, 1839. The Post Office was in a house at 104 Main Street. Towards the middle of the Nineteenth Century Dr. George Cogswell kept the Post Office at 54 Main Street across the street from the present Library. Later still, in 1904, the Post Office moved into a beautiful Richardson Romanesque building at 68 Main Street which it shared with the North Easton Savings Bank. The building has two "gargoyles" guarding the door arch. One is counting change; the other is sorting mail. Both look suspiciously like old Oliver Ames' bust in the park at the corner of Oliver and Main Streets.

During the 1840's the day in North Easton began with the tolling of the Waking Bell at 4:50 A.M.. The work day ran from 7:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. with an hour off for lunch. The day ended with the night curfew bell at 9:00 P.M.. Most employees worked a six day week rather than the three day week common in the early 1830's.

Lack of water power continued to limit company growth during the 1840's. In 1845 the Company built an earthen dam off Lincoln Street to create the 50 acre Flyaway Pond in a further effort to keep up the water supply, but it also bought another factory outside North Easton, this time in Canton. In 1844 Oliver Ames, Senior, then 65, turned active management of the company over to his sons Oakes and Oliver, Junior who became his partners. The sons proved as successful as their father. Production increased to 20,000 dozen shovels in 1845, and the Company built a brick counting house south of the family mansions on Main Street in 1847.

The transition from founder to sons was not a smooth one. Old Oliver Ames was

particularly resistant to any changes in his shovel designs or machinery. Oakes Ames had come to the conclusion that “iron was cheaper than labor” and favored a lighter shovel that would not tire the laborer’s arms so quickly. Workers were instructed to hide the new shovels whenever old Oliver appeared, but discovery was inevitable. Chaffin wrote the following in a paper for Oakes Ames of Borderland, old Oliver’s great grandson:

Mr. Ames picked up one of the shovels and examined it. . . He then touched the floor with the blade, put his foot upon it and bearing down upon it with his great strength bent it out of shape. One by one he treated the whole dozen in the same way. . . .

A battle ensued between father and sons, but the sons ultimately prevailed:

At an auction sale. . . Oakes Ames purchased several of his father’s shovels, manufactured about 1812 and used to construct earthworks in Boston when an invasion by the British was feared. He brought these shovels home and took one of them to the office. One evening he handed it to his father and told him that it was an old shovel he had picked up in Boston and asked him what he thought of it. The old gentleman not suspecting that it was one of his own make, began to criticize it severely, it was so obviously inferior to the shovels the company were then manufacturing. It was “too this” and “too that” and “ anyone ought to be ashamed of making it.”

“Well, father,” said Oakes, “look at the name of the maker stamped on it.”

“I don’t need to look at the name. Whoever made it didn’t know how to make a shovel.”

“But, father, you made it yourself and there is your name stamped upon it.”

“It is a damned lie,” said Mr. Ames and flung the shovel upon the floor and left the office in a rage. But this ended the controversy regarding the relative merits of the old and new shovel.

Old Oliver Ames had even more difficulty adjusting to the arrival of the Irish in Easton. He strongly objected to hiring so many Irishmen for the shovel works although he seemed to have less of a problem with Irish domestic help. The two sons won this point when they demonstrated that there was not enough native labor for their expanding business. “If they couldn’t get the best,” they argued, “they must get the next best.” Still, the old man could not reconcile himself to Irish Catholics:

William Hayes built the house that stands at the corner of Main and Elm Streets [2 Elm Street]. He was the foremost Irishman of the town and he was requested by some Catholics in consultation with each other to go to Mr. Ames, who took great interest in the management of the schools and request him to have the reading of the Bible omitted in the schools here. Mr. Ames glared at Hayes with anger and amazement. . .

“William Hayes, you used to come to me and put your hat under your arm and beg for a job. Now you come and demand a change in our laws and institutions to suit your religious prejudices. Damn you, Hayes! If you don’t like our laws and institutions go back to your old country and stay there.”

Hayes, of course, remained in this country until his death. The wake was held in his Elm Street home and according to tradition the deceased greeted visitors with a pipe in his mouth. This was only the second most unusual wake of these early days. One held at either 85 or 89 Lincoln Street was described this way:

The men were smoking and drinking, and they had propped up the corpse in a corner of the room, and from the corner diagonally opposite it they were throwing potatoes at it as to a mark. The corpse was kept in place by two brooms, one under each shoulder.

Whether stories like these are apocryphal or not, they were widely believed at the time and did little to endear the Irish to men like old Oliver Ames.

In 1854 when the Know Nothing Party's anti-immigrant sentiment swept through Easton, old Oliver was much in sympathy despite being a long time Whig. When Ned Buntline, a writer and public speaker, came to Easton to promote the new party, Oliver Ames sat on the platform while he spoke in the little church on the current Rockery site. It is unlikely that the forthright old man became a Know Nothing whose members were pledged to secrecy and backstabbing prejudice. As in everything else in his long life Ames had a strong opinion in this matter and had no concern at all what others thought about his views.

Despite convincing their father with the argument that the Irish were a necessary "next best" as laborers, Oliver and especially Oakes apparently did not share their father's prejudices. The Irish they brought to North Easton helped change the village not through turnover but through growth. Friction between natives and immigrants may have surged in the mid-1850's, but Oakes and Oliver ultimately minimized it through readily available employment at the shovel works and promotions for steady native and immigrant workers.

Oakes Ames took an interest in the new arrivals beyond mere business. Michael O'Beirne was the coachman for old Oliver. Michael's mother in Ireland knitted him some socks and sent them over with an emigrating friend believing that anyone coming to America would "see my son Michael." The socks, however, ended up in New York City. The young Irishman despaired of seeing them until he remembered that Oakes Ames often went to New York on business. He went to the head of the leading business in town and asked him to hunt up his socks on his next visit to New York. The genial Ames agreed and with some difficulty found the socks and brought them home to Easton. Thus, a financier become a deliveryman for a coach driver!

Besides being a friend to immigrants whom he often helped with gifts as well as employment, Oakes Ames was not afraid to take a stand on the other important issue of his time, slavery. Chaffin noted:

Reverend L. B. Bates was once here as a Methodist minister. He says that one night not long after the passage of the infamous Fugitive Slave Law, a poor slave called him up at midnight for food and help. Reverend Bates fed him and then took him to Oakes Ames who gave him money and sent him on his way rejoicing

Returning to the Ames family's attempt to control the power of the Queset, in 1851, Oakes and Oliver Ames finally bought the last water power source in the village and used it to grind shovel blades. This was the oldest privilege in North Easton, James Leonard's old dam which had created Langwater Pond. Throughout the Eighteenth Century it had remained in the hands of the Leonard family who added a grist mill to the old forge. During the first half of the Nineteenth Century, it passed through a succession of hands, the most notable being Elijah Howard and Gurdon Stone (who built the house at 228 Main Street near the pond). Known as the Red Factory privilege, it had produced nails, tacks, cotton yarn and sheeting although none too successfully. This addition guaranteed the Company's complete control of the Queset, but it probably did little to increase shovel production.

On March 2, 1852, an event occurred that changed the shape of North Easton. Shortly

before 11 P.M. fire broke out in the finishing shop on the "Island." In less than an hour several hundred feet of buildings, tools, machinery and a thousand dozen finished shovels were reduced to ashes. One estimate of the loss was \$40,000. However, the Ames family and the neighborhood rebounded quickly. Carpenters from nearby towns built temporary shops, and in less than three weeks work resumed. The building of new, permanent stone shops then began on the current site west of the Historical Society's Railroad Station. Most of the stone came from a quarry behind what is now Frothingham Hall on Barrows Street. Built first was the Long Shop (530 feet) with the Company's first steam engine (60 horse power) installed in it. A second steam engine arrived in 1853, and from that point on the growth of the Company was no longer limited by the power of the Queset.

On May 16, 1855 a private railroad, built by the Ames Company, opened for the shipment of shovels. The line ran from North Easton to Stoughton where it connected with the Boston and Providence Railroad. Previously, four or six horse teams carted the shovels to railheads in Canton and Stoughton or to the steamboats at Fall River. In 1866 the Old Colony Railroad ran a line through North Easton, taking over the Company's private branch to Stoughton and eventually expanding to the Fall River shipyards.

Freed of its complete dependence on water power, the Company and neighborhood grew quickly. Demand for shovels also grew with the Gold Rush and the expansion of railroads into the Midwest. By 1855 three hundred and thirty men were employed in the shops. Providing housing for these men and their families became a major concern of the Company. The temporary shops built after the fire were designed to be divided into dwellings later. Dragged across Shovel Shop Pond in winter, they became the duplex homes which stand between 10 and 32 Oliver Street. The Ames Company purchased other buildings to use as tenements. Even old schools were moved, renovated, and used for houses rather than being destroyed. By 1860 the Company owned most of the housing in North Easton. Although the family had early provided financial support for educational and religious development in the neighborhood, their building program before the Civil War was mainly for their own business interests, not for the general welfare of the town. That pattern would change with the arrival of the third generation of the Ames family who would give the neighborhood the essential form we see today.

The Ames family diversified their business interests in 1854 when Oakes and Oliver Ames became partners with Edwin W. Gilmore in a firm that manufactured hinges, ship scrapers, washers and other iron articles. The new company filled the space where the original shovel shop had been before the great fire. In 1871 Gilmore bought out the Ameses. The following year he moved his works to a U-shaped building near the railroad tracks north of Oliver Street near Elm Street. There he switched to steam-powered operations. The old site on the Island soon became the home of the Easton Novelty Works. In the 1880's Gilmore's firm employed about 75 men and boys making it the second largest employer in town. The factory could turn out more than 15,000 hinges a day. In 1884 Gilmore added making wire picture cord to his business. By the turn of the century the hinge business had declined, and the company made only wire and picture cords with three employees in a small part of the building. Later the Ames Company utilized the building for storage. In 1930 the Stedfast Rubber Company purchased the factory. The old building burned to the ground in a spectacular fire on February 22, 1959.

During the Civil War the Ames Shovel Company prospered. The old counting house expanded in 1863, and the following year both the North Easton Savings Bank and the

First National Bank of Easton (now Bay Bank) opened in the same building. The company's founder Oliver Ames, Sr. died in 1863, and his one-third interest was divided among his grandsons. In 1865 the shops produced 65,500 dozen shovels valued at \$982,500. Only 250 men worked in the shops probably due to the effects of the war and the introduction of steam powered machinery. By 1869 the work force and the number of shovels produced had doubled again. In that year the Company built a canal from Picker Pond to the Hoe Shop.

A rare glimpse into the life of the village at this time comes from an unknown Ames worker. According to him, when news of Lee's surrender reached the shovel works

Everyone yelled and cheered, aprons were torn off, hammers and shovels that happened to be in hand at that moment were thrown in all directions, the engine was shut down, the whistles shrieked and screamed, and for the time being everybody lost their heads. When the excitement had partially abated, they all stampeded for the church. We gathered around the steps, brief speeches were made; the flag was run up and cheers upon cheers were given. A motion was made to hold a public parade that afternoon. Jack Murphy, a brave young soldier then in his teens, who had been to the front and returned with an empty sleeve, was chosen to lead the procession

In the afternoon the parade took place, young Murphy taking the place of honor. We marched through the principal streets of the village, escorted by a band of music, and much enthusiasm prevailed; but the excitement of the morning had subsided, and after a short march the procession returned to the church green [today's Rockery] and was dismissed.

During the Civil War Oliver Ames, Jr. and Congressman Oakes Ames moved into national prominence as the developers of the transcontinental railroad idea. President Abraham Lincoln personally asked Congressman Ames to pursue this audacious project. In the troubled financial times of Postwar America, the Ames brothers successfully completed the project, but it put a large strain on the family finances. When Oakes Ames died in 1873, his estate of about \$6,000,000 was so entangled that his son had to pledge his own estate to satisfy creditors. The family's desire to memorialize the life of Oakes Ames and his brother Oliver, who died in 1877, marked the start of the period of grand philanthropy which left North Easton as one of the most architecturally distinguished neighborhoods in the United States.

However, even before this time the Ames family had helped to establish churches and schools in North Easton. For example, the Ames Company covered most of the cost of the three-story North Easton Grammar School in 1869. In 1851 the Ames', probably at the instance of Oakes and Oliver, Junior, donated land on the south shore of Shovel Shop Pond for the town's first Catholic Chapel. The site was near the village's first lockup, so that the hymn singing of the faithful could edify the Saturday night drunks. Chaffin noted in 1845 "liberal aid came from Village people" to help North Easton's Methodists build a church on the site of the current Rockery. By 1860 North Easton's Unitarians, including the Ames family, had moved into this church which one minister insisted was so small he could spit from the pulpit into the gallery. The Methodists built a new sanctuary at 140 Main Street in 1864, apparently without Ames' family aid, and occupied it until 1876. In that year, after Unity Church was completed, Oliver Ames 2nd gave the old church at the future Rockery site back to the Methodists with the stipulation that they move it. This they did, and the old 1845 church still stands today on Mechanic Street. Today, this church, now a synagogue, houses the oldest church bell in Easton. In 1884 the game of musical churches ended when Oakes A. Ames (1829-1899) gave fifty percent of the cost

of buying the former Methodist church on Main Street to the young Swedish church which would become the Covenant Congregational Church.

The Ames Company's connection with Sweden had begun with the import of first class Swedish iron; by the 1880's the Company was importing between 1,200 and 1,500 tons annually. A small number of Swedes had come to North Easton after the Civil War. In 1870 the Ames Company brought in twelve Swedes to work in the shovel shop, and the number of Swedish immigrants quickly grew to rival the Irish as the dominant group of new Americans. Many of Easton's Swedes came from the farming districts of Vestergotland and Bohuslan on Sweden's west coast. After a turn with the Ames Company, several found it easy to open small farms in their new homeland. For example, John Lindquist, father of North Easton's lamplighter, operated a dairy from his barn on Jenny Lind Street, and Ted and Linus Johnson had a large farm on Bay Road. Perhaps the most unusual occupation was held by a Mr. Ottason who went door to door in the fall slaughtering farm animals.

Others became active in the building trade as carpenters or masons. Carl Johnson was a builder and mason. The Rydholm brothers built homes including several along Jenny Lind Street. Hobart Anderson was a plumber and John and Albert Carlson were masons. Some Swedes owned commercial enterprises also. John Lake operated a grocery while John Anderson had a dry goods store.

By the turn of the century the Swedes had organized two churches, today's Covenant Congregational and Holy Trinity Lutheran, and several civic organizations. The earliest of the fraternal groups was the God Templar Logen Svenska Kronan #10. This was a temperance group formed in the 1890's with Sander Larson as its President. If a member was reported to have taken a drink, he had three weeks to abstain or his name was "utstrycken." Since this was the only chance for Swedes to socialize in their own language, many struggled to abide by the rule. Many were happy when two other Swedish organizations followed in 1901 and 1907 which did not have a temperance rule!

By the turn of the Twentieth Century many of North Easton's Swedes had become American citizens due to the efforts of leaders like Sander Larson. Mr. Larson, who came to America in the late 1880's, recognized the importance of participating in established American institutions. In the decade after 1910 he served on the town Election Board, the Board of Directors for the Easton Cooperative Bank and the District's Prudential Committee. Walfred Broman and John Eak were other early Swedes who served on the Prudential Committee. Larson also ran for State Representative before his untimely death in 1918. The house that Larson bought when he married in 1907 stands at 12 Jenny Lind Street where his daughter still resides.

Not all Scandinavian immigrants came from Sweden; Sigurd Wiedemann, for instance, came from Norway. Arriving at Ellis Island at age fifteen just after the first World War, Mr. Wiedemann passed through Easton by train on the way to Boston. Years later after educating himself at the Boston Evening Trade School and Northeastern University, he returned to live here when he married one of the daughters of Sander Larson. A gifted designer and engineer, he worked for the Office of Scientific Research and Development on secret research for the Army Air Corp during World War II. This turned out to be the beginning of a long career that concluded with several awards for his work in the manned space program including the Apollo program which put the first men on the moon.

Another generation of Swedish political figures rose to prominence after the Second World War. Harland Almquist, who married another daughter of Sander Larson, served as a Selectman from 1953 to 1964. Norman Anderson was on the School Committee for many years during this era. Finally, in 1995 Esther Anderson is nearing her fortieth year of service in the Town Clerk's office.

In the early Twentieth Century the role of newest immigrants passed to the Portuguese who were the last large group to come to North Easton for jobs with the Ames Company. They too continued their cultural traditions by establishing a fraternal group of their own, the Portuguese-American Club on Sullivan Avenue. This organization continued until the Second World War. Another cultural institution, still flourishing today in its third generation, is Easton's Portuguese Band.

By 1885 North Easton had developed to the point where it would be recognizable to today's residents. Around the east and south sides of the Shovel Shop are many of the old company houses and tenements dating from the 1850's and built to hold one or two families. By the turn of the century the Company owned 97 houses in North Easton. Across the street from the west side of the shops stood several of the Ames' earlier homesteads, larger and grander than those of their workers, but not the palaces of the nouveau riche New Yorkers who cluttered Newport, Rhode Island at the same time.

Today the other of the two earliest mansions is Queset House at 51 Main Street. Built in 1855 for Oakes Angier Ames, later the third President of the Ames Company, the design comes from Andrew Jackson Downing's *Cottage Residences*. Downing died in 1852, but possibly his associate Calvert Vaux may have had a hand in the design. Even more likely, a construction company may have simply used Downing's book without recourse to an architect. John Ames Mitchell, the designer of Unity Church, harmoniously enlarged Queset in the mid-1870's.

The other mansion is Unity Close (23 Main Street) designed by George Snell and built in 1862 for Oliver Ames, Jr.. Later, this was the home of Mr. and Mrs. William Parker for many decades.

North of these houses is the Unitarian Church, built through a gift of Oliver Ames 2nd. in 1875. In its setting, the church and its Olmsted landscaped cemetery have the look of the rural English countryside rather than an American industrial village. To the south of the old family homes and the vanished counting house are two great works of H. H. Richardson with landscaping originally by Frederick Law Olmsted. The Ames Free Library was built in 1879 by the children of Oliver Ames, Jr. as part of the terms of his will. Overlooking the library to the south is the Oakes Ames Memorial Hall, a massive, Richardson Romanesque building completed in 1881 which seems to brood over the village.

For many years the third floor of the Hall was the home of the Paul Dean Lodge of Freemasons, a Yankee institution that has grown to include members of all Easton's ethnic groups. The first reception of another Yankee institution, the Clover Club, was also held in the Oakes Ames Memorial Hall. The Clover Club was founded in North Easton in 1891 as a service organization. Today, more than a century later, it too has members from many of Easton's ethnic traditions.

The stores, churches and schools of the village lie along Main Street and several streets to the north and south. Here houses range from small to mid-sized one-time company houses mixed with small to substantial private homes. The old high school and

the “new” grammar school, both large brick buildings, were built by the Ameses, the first in 1896 and the other in 1916.

Near the east end of the village is the Immaculate Conception Church, built in 1902 from stone quarried on the site. The stained glass window by John Ames Mitchell overlooking Main Street was originally in the Unity Church. It was donated by the Ames family in memory of Michael O’Beirne whose story was told earlier in this chapter. This church stands to the east of the site of St. Mary’s, the first Catholic church in town, which was opened in 1865. The parish used St. Mary’s as a church hall after Immaculate Conception opened. In October 1949 a fire destroyed the old building. The Knights of Columbus and the Daughters of Isabella both began in active association with this parish.

On the south and east edges of the village two specialty agricultural enterprises existed. James Leach, who came to Easton about 1859 to work in his brother-in-law’s shoe factory at 14 Center Street, opened a florist business at 167-169 Center Street in the 1870’s. The initial florist business involved one greenhouse that later expanded to four including two large boiler rooms, two work rooms and an office. At the time of the expansion James’ son Charles A. Leach joined the firm. The business then became known as J. H. Leach and Son, Florist. The speciality of the house was carnations and James propagated and developed a special variety called Pink Supreme. Initially, Mr. Leach delivered his own product to the Boston Flower Exchange, but later he shipped by Anderson’s Express. After the death of Mr. James Leach, in the 1920’s, his son Charles took in Charles Norberg as a partner. That partnership continued for many years. After the death of Charles Leach in 1948, the greenhouses were demolished. The Leach house still standing at 171 Center Street next to the greenhouse site was built about the time Charles joined his father in the business. Evelyn and Doris Leach, well known to many in town, were James’ granddaughters.

Anderson’s Express was a local transport business run in the 1920’s by Mr. George Anderson. This express company also served North Easton’s other wholesale florist, McFarland’s Greenhouses. Located at the current site of the North Easton Savings Bank at 295 Main Street, the business was begun by John McFarland in 1885. His son Bill carried on the business for many years. This firm produced a variety of seasonal flowers, lilies of the valley and calla lilies. From 1940 to 1965 C. Eric Nyquist operated six greenhouses at this site with about 15,000 square feet under glass. The greenhouses and a nearby barn were demolished in 1965 to make way for the bank.

Back at the heart of the neighborhood just east of the shops is the third of Richardson’s masterpieces in the village, the Old Colony Railroad Station at 80 Mechanic Street, built and given to the railroad by F. L. Ames (1835-1893) in 1882. The current building replaced an earlier wooden structure where the train actually ran through the station. Before the railroad station was built, a hotel, later demolished, occupied the north end of the site. Across the street from the station was Ramcat where the old Ames Boarding Houses stood. Mary Ames Frothingham had the last houses on Ramcat torn down in 1930. At that time there were three two–story frame dwellings for two or four families, a one and a half story frame cottage, and two one–story stone buildings.

Cook’s Hotel (earlier called Young’s Hotel) stood near where Douglas King’s building is at the corner of Elm and Oliver Streets. Lindley Cook Dacey was the innkeeper and chef, but he rented his hotel from the Ames Company. Travelling salesmen or “drummers” stayed at the hotel in connection with Shovel Shop business.

To the north and east of Shovel Shop Pond are the extensive grounds of Governor Oliver and F. L. Ames' "Langwater" estate. The large stone home of Governor Oliver Ames 2nd was built in 1862 just inside the Oliver Street entrance to the grounds. This house stood until demolished in 1937. In 1950 the present home of Mrs. David Ames was raised on the old foundation. North of the pond is the F. L. Ames home designed in 1859 by Snell and Gregerson. The Elm Street entrance to Langwater is through the stone arch of the Gate Lodge, another building designed by Richardson and completed in 1881. Langwater and eventually Stonehill were also the home of the nationally acclaimed Langwater Guernseys and Clydesdales. Begun by Frederick L. Ames and expanded by his sons, the Langwater Guernsey herd improved the gene pool of dairy cattle throughout the country.

Across the street from the Gate Lodge are Wayside, now the Town Office (136 Elm Street), but originally the 1912 estate of Mary Ames Frothingham and Spring Hill (104 Elm Street), the 1895 home of William H. Ames. Each of these mansions is much grander than the homes of the first two Ames generations on Main Street, but they still maintain the scale of the neighborhood as a whole. East of the Gate Lodge on Elm Street is the fifth Richardson building, the wooden Gardener's Cottage still owned by the Ames family.

Unlike some planned industrial communities like Pullman, Illinois, North Easton just grew, and the Ames family grew with it. The impressive public buildings, which give the village its unique appearance, were all constructed in 1869 or later. At this time when the third generation of the Ames family took over, the neighborhood had solidified to where only large scale destruction followed by massive rebuilding could change North Easton into a Pullman. Instead, the third generation called upon the leading artists of their time such as H. H. Richardson, John Ames Mitchell and Frederick Law Olmsted to unify and beautify the achievements of the family founders.

Pullman was a disastrous failure: its name coupled with one of the worst strikes in American history. North Easton was a success. Despite the start of a Knights of Labor union chapter here on May 26, 1886, North Easton never had a strike for wages like the one that tore Pullman apart. The only recorded "strike" occurred in 1902 when some workers walked off the job rather than train a Portuguese worker for a skilled position. Despite such minor tensions, residents from the era of 1900 to 1920 look back upon their neighborhood as one of the most advanced and pleasant in the state. A look at life during that time may show what made North Easton so special.

One of the many things that made the North Easton neighborhood unique at the turn of the century was its district status. In 1887 the need for an adequate water supply and fire protection led to the establishment of the first special district government in Easton. The district system was a cause of great divisiveness in town, but the large population in North Easton needed expanded services which the rest of Easton did not then need and would not pay for. Before the establishment of the district Frederick L. Ames ran a private water company for the village. In 1887 the new North Easton Water District, based on Mr. Ames' original efforts, was one of the most advanced systems in the area. The North Easton Water District became the foundation for our current excellent Water Department. When the ever curious Reverend William Chaffin fell into the well that provided water for the Lincoln Street Standpipe, an Irish friend proclaimed "Begorra, we will not have to send to the Pope of Rome for Holy Water, now we have it on tap!"

The North Easton District's Fire and Police Departments also were the ancestors of the unified town departments. Both District Departments often provided "outside assistance" to other parts of town. The District provided sidewalks and lighting as well, but because the whole was dependent on a tax of only North Easton residents, frugality was the rule. For example, before World War I street lights were provided on only 221 days a year. There were no lights on weekends, short summer nights, or during bright moonlight!

Signe Johnson DiPasqua, Anne Lawton Wilbar, Charlotte Wallin Nelson, Enid Kafka and H. Judson Robinson all grew up in North Easton just after the turn of the century. The women all came from immigrant families while Mr. Robinson lived at Sunnyside (89 Center Street), a large upper middle class home. We will let them be our guide to an era which was not so long ago, but one which is very different from today. Let's start with Charlotte Wallin Nelson giving us a child's tour of North Easton's business district:

Starting by the railroad bridge at Sullivan Avenue on the south side of Main Street was Mitrano's fruit store (99 Main Street). The Mitranos were the only Italians in town, and doing well too with their little business. Next to them was a small grocery store owned by an Irish family named Dineen. Once in a great while we kids could go there to buy a nickel's worth of our favorite candy. We were always glad when a certain clerk waited on us because after the candy was weighed he always added a few extra pieces to fill the small bag to the very top!

Then there was McCarthy who owned the big building, later a garage. The fire horses were kept there. This family had a big St. Bernard dog named Rex who, at the sound of the fire alarm, was the first volunteer to appear at the fire station on Sullivan Avenue. He followed the fire apparatus to every fire. Rex McCarthy! Everybody's favorite fireman!

On the north side of Main Street and farther toward the east was the real business area. One store we particularly remember as children was O'Connor's News Store (122 Main Street) where newspapers and magazines were sold. Mary O'Connor was the owner. The candy in her store was far too expensive for us—chocolate covered almonds, small chocolates covered with silver paper, etc.. She also had a soda fountain. Needless to say we didn't patronize this store very much as it was far too high-class for us. My brother Oscar's (Wallin) first business venture was as a newsboy for Mary O'Connor. When he returned from the Navy in the First World War, he and his lifelong friend, Sif (Jeff) Haglund became co-owners of this store. They continued as partners until Oscar's death in 1938.

Schindler's store, though, was our favorite. It was where we went when fortune smiled on us with a penny or two. There we could get a variety of penny candy like sponge candy, licorice, etc.. They had small ice cream cones too. The Schindlers were nice. There were Mr. and Mrs. Schindler and their daughter Theresa, a buxom and beautiful young woman.

McMenamy's market was where the best meat and fish were to be bought. There was a big family here, and I believe the children and grandchildren of Mr. McMenamy are still running successful meat and fish markets in Easton and Brockton. John Lake also ran a successful grocery store in the neighborhood.

Signe DiPasqua adds this information about the stores on Main Street:

The Chinese laundry was located in a small building now demolished that stood east of the building numbered 165 at the southeast corner of Main and Williams Streets. Frightful stories were told about the Chinese so it was with much apprehension that I went to the dark and steamy shop for the first time. My fears were quickly dispelled by the kind, mild-mannered man who worked that shop.

Enid Kafka, who was "Miss Easton" during the 1925 two hundredth anniversary

celebrations, recalls other stores and shops:

Bradley's store was in the building now numbered 108 Main Street, also a grocery store. Then followed Galvin's barber shop (112 Main Street), its tonsorial artist being Cornelius Galvin, the father of the Connie Galvin that continued the shop for many years; then followed William N. Howard's Insurance Agency before O'Connor's News Store....

Living at the Torrey House (81-89 Main Street) made us handy to Kelly's Hall (14 Center Street) where dances and many social functions took place. It was in this Hall each spring, for many years, that I and many others performed in Mrs. Molly McNamara's piano recitals. At some point musicals came to Kelly's Hall. That is where I saw my first movie and established for myself the high ambition of being a pianist for the silent movies, a position then held, in the North Easton movie house by Anna McMullen. At 10 Center Street was Swanson's Restaurant and ice cream parlor. Across the street on Center Street was Spooner's Drug Store and Miss Plummer's hat shop.

Many of these buildings still stand today serving the current generation of North Easton shopkeepers, but business people in turn of the century Easton had a different way of making a sale. Signe DiPasqua writes:

Ice, coal, wood, meat, fish, bread, and crackers were all home delivered by horse drawn teams. In the winter the wagons turned to sleighs and the children stole rides on the runners. The sleigh of Swanson's Bakery seemed to give the best ride. Milk was delivered every day. John Lake and Dan Dineen, grocers, would come to the house to take orders and deliver the next day. A salesman from Shepard's Market in Brockton offered Swedish delicacies.

The last of these door to door food sellers was Francis "Cookie" Callahan who sold crackers and cookies from his truck through the 1960's.

These vendors and other horse drawn vehicles provided much entertainment for the children of the neighborhood as Anne Lawton Wilbar notes:

One other thing that's gone, but not forgotten is Mrs. John Dyer with her starched apron and horse and wagon coming in the early evening selling one-cent ice cream cones, also the larger ones. The one-cent ones were our financial limit.

There were several horse-drawn vehicles that I remember. The ice man from McCarthy's was one. You would see how long you could hold the small piece of ice in one hand before having to transfer it to the other while sucking it until it melted. The fish man would give you head and fins for your cat. Mr. Cleverly was the milk man. There was no such thing as pasteurized milk in those days.

The handsomest creation I remember was the "Easton Belle," a two horse coach that brought the school children from the Bay Road area. Painted yellow with flowers on the side and driven by Mr. Will McLeod.

A very familiar sight, any time of day or night, summer or winter, was the little black buggy with the round window on the side driven by the town's beloved Dr. Stevenson with the ever faithful black horse "Nell."

Other itinerant businessmen included the scissors' sharpener and the ladder man who came each year to sell ladders large and small and whose visits, childhood legend says, invariably brought rain! No peripatetic entrepreneur drew more comment than Solomon Fox the ragman. This early recycler bought rags, bones, and bottles. A pint bottle was worth a half cent and a quart was worth a penny to any child brave enough to approach him. His horse drawn cart was filled with rubbish and according to H. Judson Robinson, he was

rather a shabby individual. He had a rasping voice which called out, "Any rags, any

bones, any bottles today?" I was afraid of him because I was reminded by my mother when I was naughty that she would sell me to the ragman if I didn't straighten out forthwith.

Another well-remembered figure from this era was the village lamplighter Axel Lindquist. Signe DiPasqua writes:

Following supper in the summer everyone would gather around the Lamp Post. Axel Lindquist was the lamplighter. Kerosene was burned. Children would play around the light until the curfew bell rang at 9:00 p.m. at the Shovel Shop. There was no excuse for being out of the house after 9:05.

H. Judson Robinson adds:

Fuel had to be supplied each post by morning and the lamps were lighted at sundown.

Axel had the most amazing horse I ever saw. Small and thin, but he could travel! He must have been miraculously trained since he stopped in the exact place every time and I never knew him to start without the word of his master. The wagon was a four wheeled affair. It had a metal box containing what looked like a present day plumber's torch and when the torch was applied to the gas mantel of the light it lighted and cast quite a bit of light. How Axel Lindquist ever managed this service alone in all kinds of weather I do not know. He could reach the lamp by standing precariously in the light wagon so no ladder was necessary.

For both children and adults there seemed to be more things to do in North Easton than there are today. In winter Signe DiPasqua notes that:

Sliding began in the driveway of the Kennedy brothers at 20 Seaver Street, then down Seaver Street, cross Main Street, jump the curb at Randall's house at 228 Main Street, continue on the side hill there, and then sail onto Fred's Pond. Promptly at 4:00 P. M., the Kennedy's would ring a bell and the children would gather at the back door for a piece of penny candy.

Anne Lawton Wilbar tells us that there was a lot to do in summer as well:

On Monday evenings in the summer, with my mother we walked to the Post Office Square to hear the Anna C. Ames Band Concert with Mr. Walter Smith as soloist and bandmaster. When the curfew rang at 9 o'clock, we went and bought our popcorn to eat on the way home. During the other days of the week, we also enjoyed the music played on the gramophone of Dr. Frank Tilden who would open his house windows so the neighborhood could share the music.

Enid Kavka adds:

There were no organized teams such as little league, soccer or basketball. We made our own fun playing ball, marbles, spinning tops and, of course, for we girls, there were always dolls. We roller skated on the sidewalks and ice skated on the ponds. Few of us had bicycles. My brother was lucky to have a second hand one.

According to Signe DiPasqua the Fourth of July, then as now, was a time of special celebration:

Murphy's Store was on Mechanic Street. On the Fourth of July it sold firecracker's, sparklers and American flags. On the Fourth there was usually a Sunday school picnic at either Long Pond or the Grove. The Grove was located east of Reynolds Street where the home at 34 Seaver Street is. The Kennedy brothers would set off a fireworks display.

Ethnic holidays also added exotic flavors to North Easton. By the turn of the century,

everyone knew the Irish tradition of corned beef and cabbage on Saint Patrick's Day. Another long-standing Irish tradition was picnics at Picker Field. New to North Easton then were the Portuguese barbecues celebrating the feast days of popular saints with such dishes as Carne d'Esteto. Around Christmas another Portuguese delicacy, Carne Vinho d'Alhos, was served. Equally unusual to Yankees, Irish, and Portuguese alike were the special dishes associated with Swedish Christmas. Charlotte Wallin Nelson describes them:

On Christmas Eve we had had our miniature smörgåsbord and lutefisk supper. This supper menu consisted of boiled potatoes, the lutefisk, which was imported from Scandinavia, white sauce and mustard. For dessert it was always risgröt (rice cooked in milk) and rödgröt (Danish raspberry pudding) with milk poured over it. On Christmas Eve relatives came to the house for supper and the exchange of gifts. As was the custom, some of the gifts were thrown in through the front door and the receiver had to go out and find the giver before the gift could be opened.

[After a 5:30 A.M. church service on Christmas morning] it was home for another smörgåsbord which included ham, pickled herring, anchovies, sardines, pickled beets, hogshead cheese, sausage, homemade Swedish rye bread, coffee bread, and many kinds of homemade cookies.

Catherine McMenamy remembers a very different Christmas among the Irish in North Easton:

When the sun had set on the eve of Christmas, [Irish families] would place a lighted candle in the window of their abode. The day of Christmas Eve was a day of abstinence. Late in the afternoon of that day mother would prepare for supper a large oyster stew.

From later in the century, David Varella recalls a Portuguese Christmas:

Early in the evening of Christmas Eve, warmly clad musicians, with instrument under arm, or in hand, would gather to commence the celebration.... Once gathered, the members of the Portuguese Band repeated an old tradition. Travelling in single file, the group snaked its way to Ramcat, Mullen Way, and Center Street stopping regularly on route before the homes of all the Portuguese families, there providing a brief musical interlude, a concert fit for a king. The recipients of this offering would then greet the musicians and their friends with the warm greeting: boas festas and provide food and libations

Exotic visitors also often enlivened the village scene. Winthrop Ames, a major theater producer who lived at Queset, brought his actor friends to town. Residents often saw such early movie stars as George Arliss, Katherine Cornell, and Leslie Howard strolling along the streets. A recent resident of Queset notes that some visitors from that era still may not have left the scene. He reports a ghostly wizened old man who appeared in a third floor bedroom and a spectral young woman seen polishing furniture in a long dress and a high necked blouse.

There were still more colorful living visitors on the streets Charlotte Wallin Nelson adds:

Gypsies periodically came to North Easton in their brightly colored Gypsy costumes, riding in wagons drawn by horses. They went from door to door, telling fortunes and trying to wrangle money from unsuspecting people. We always kept far away from them as we'd been told that they kidnapped children if they got the chance! Sometimes the police would send them out of town, and they would then set up camp in some wooded area along the highway.

If that weren't enough, Signe DiPasqua notes:

Once or twice a year, a hobo or two would stop at our house seeking a free meal. As a freight train slowed, in its approach to the North Easton railroad station, the hoboes would jump from the train and make our way to our street. They often chopped wood for their meals.

Finally, unknown to these hard-working girls a future celebrity lived among them as Charlotte Nelson tells us:

I think it's time to mention a girl who lived on another street near us by the name of Ruth Graves.... She was in the same class as I in school. As I remember, she was just an average student who talked a lot. In fact, she was always talking, with the result that as very young children we nicknamed her Babbling Bess. We could hardly stand it when she came over to our street to play!

The kids in High School who took the College Course...were the kids of the so-called Yankees. Ruth was one of these! But, strange to say, she was interested in cooking of all things! So she elected to take Household Arts. Ruth went on to become a dietician.

After her marriage to Kenneth Wakefield, they bought an old toll house in Whitman, Massachusetts, restored it, and opened a restaurant called the Toll House.... The Toll House Restaurant became famous for the Toll House cookies which originated there.

Despite the feeling of Norman Rockwell America given by the previous recollections, North Easton had the Shovel Company and that dominated everything as L. Judson Robinson writes:

One only had to hear from experience the noise from the shovel shops to know what noise really was. The rhythm of the great hammers continued all day long as they pounded out the steel blanks... On a clear day the steady "bang, bang, bang" could be heard a mile or more away. Yet no one thought of complaining...I reasoned if the Ames family could stand it, who lived close by, I guess the rest of us could who lived a mile away. One would have thought it might have annoyed school students at study in nearby schools, but I can't remember that it did.

Signe DiPasqua's father worked for the Shovel Company and she writes of a child's view of the giant factory:

On occasion, one of us children would have to carry Pa's lunch to him at the Shovel Shop... Often, in the yard of the shop, we would see a pair of oxen pulling the wooden carts. Those animals, neither looking like cows or horses, which were better known to us, appeared as monstrous animals. The carts were used to transport materials within the shop complex and within the village. The animals would be watered in the pond at the rear of the Parker estate... We would enter the Long Shop through the door on the Mechanic Street side. The first floor level was dark, dirty, and noisy. Climbing the stairs to where Pa worked on the second floor and where were located the inspection room, the shipping rooms and office it was much cleaner than the first floor and smelled heavily of creosote. The metal parts of the shovels would have been dipped in creosote and drained on racks. The continuity of that process provided a clean smell in that area.

Apparently, the Company's oxen were the terror of little girls everywhere in the village because Anne Lawton Wilbar notes:

Speaking of being awed, the Ames Shovel Works had a yoke of oxen to do local hauling. At noontime they were brought to drink from the little pond in front of the blacksmith shop. On occasion they would get frisky and be hard to handle. We girls would be walking home for lunch and those beasts just terrified us. We would run as

fast as our legs would go up the Ames Library steps, all the way to the door and, of course, the animals had no interest or intention of following us.

The North Easton remembered by these story tellers was shaped by the actions of the Ames men in the Nineteenth Century. If we characterize the Nineteenth Century as the Era of the Ames Men, we may, without slighting the extremely important contributions of John S. Ames and his sons John, David, and Oliver F., call the Twentieth Century the Era of the Ames Women. Three women mentioned in this chapter, in addition to Blanche Ames, have made a lasting impact on North Easton and the town as a whole.

The first of the Ames women to leave her mark on North Easton was born Anna C. Ray on Nantucket in 1840. On March 14, 1860, she married future Governor Oliver Ames. They honeymooned in the home that is now 11 Lincoln Street. While Oliver Ames' political career grew, culminating in the governorship in 1887, Anna was content to play the role of Victorian wife and mother of six children. Governor Ames was an early supporter of women's rights, but Anna C. Ames made no public statement on women's rights during the years her husband lived.

A strait-laced Victorian woman she may have been, but Anna did have an interesting side. Her granddaughter Pauline Ames Plimpton writes of an interesting family tradition:

While my grandfather was on a trip to New York, my grandmother went to visit a medium in Brockton, a trip I feel my grandfather would not have approved. During the seance, the medium went into a trance and described Mrs. Ames parlor as being white (actually it was all done in brown plush) and then in great excitement exclaimed, "Oh, why didn't he take the other ones?" None of this made any sense to my grandmother until the carriage brought her home to find that there had been a fire in the linen closet and that the brown furniture in the parlor had been draped in white sheets. Furthermore, the governor came home from New York and brought her a present of black and white cameos, saying, "I had a very hard time choosing between these and a pink and white set."

The death of former Governor Ames in 1895 brought a change in Anna Ames' life. She became one of the major benefactors of the High School paid for by and named for her late husband. Around the turn of the century a desire to develop the culture of Easton's young people led Anna C. Ames to establish the Oliver Ames High School Band. She purchased instruments and uniforms for the thirty plus students as well as supporting a music instructor. During the summer Oliver Ames band alumni joined with some current band members for concerts. As we have seen, these concerts became the center of the town's entertainment. As we will see, the band also played a small role in a much larger sphere than North Easton Village. Sometime before her death in 1917, the summer band concert group renamed themselves the Anna C. Ames band. Truly, Mrs. Ames is the founding grandmother of Easton's acclaimed music program.

The success of the band led Mrs. Ames to take on another project advancing the physical well-being of high school students. In 1902 she built a gymnasium on Barrows Street on land given by the Shovel Company. The building, still in use today, had a large central gymnasium. The rear of the building had three small rooms for music instructors and a larger room for band rehearsals. In a final gesture of support to her husband's school, Anna C. Ames donated the money to electrify the original Oliver Ames High School.

By 1913 Mrs. Ames was 73. Her twelve year old granddaughter remembered her at this time as an imperious old woman with an ear trumpet, but Eastoners considered her a

beloved representative of North Easton's first family. After a lifetime of political silence, she suddenly became part of the biggest political fight of the century.

Anna's son, Oakes Ames had married Blanche Ames at the turn of the century. In 1913 Blanche Ames became a leading woman's suffrage advocate. Despite an earlier strain in the family when Oakes and Blanche moved from Anna's home to Borderland, Blanche converted her mother-in-law to the suffrage cause as well. In the last few years of her life Anna joined with her son and daughter-in-law to support the cause of women's rights despite bitter opposition from most of the family, male and female. In 1914 Anna became the honorary president of the Easton suffragettes. Her house became a center for rallies and she lent her car for parades and taking voters to the polls. Her beloved band appeared in demonstrations in Boston as well as Easton. Anna also gave \$25,000 to the cause of suffrage. Perhaps most importantly, she persuaded Easton's Father Daniel Doran of Immaculate Conception Church to speak out for a woman's right to vote at a time when most Catholic priests were in opposition. Mrs. Ames did not live to see the victory of her cause, dying in 1917, but her support for Easton's youth and women all across America gives her a lasting spot in the pantheon of Easton's great citizens.

Oddly, the second important Ames woman of this century, Mary S. Ames Frothingham rose to prominence in the town by opposing women's suffrage. Mary Ames, twenty-seven years younger than Anna C. Ames, was the daughter of Frederick Lothrop Ames and Rebecca Blair Ames. By 1905 she had joined the Massachusetts Association Opposed to the Further Extension of Suffrage, and later she became its president. Extremely active personally and financially in the anti-suffrage movement, Mary Ames led the establishment of the National Association Opposed to the Further Extension of Suffrage. She was vice president of the national association.

In 1912 with her parents long dead and her brothers all married, she decided to leave the family mansion, "Langwater," and establish her own home across the street from the Gate Lodge on Elm Street. She chose architect Guy Lowell to design this mansion named "Wayside." She acquired a number of parcels of land and moved four houses two of which still stand at 154 and 164 Elm Street.

In 1916 at age forty-nine, she married Louis Ames Frothingham. Ironically, she quickly turned the skill acquired in organizing the anti-suffrage movement to managing Mr. Frothingham's political career. This skill at politics does seem to undercut many of the tenets of her cause, but Mrs. Frothingham remained an ardent anti-suffragette until the the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment. In 1921 her husband became our area's Congressman, and as Chairperson of the Woman's Republican Town Committee, Mary worked diligently to encourage women to vote!

If Mrs. Frothingham did nothing beyond fighting against woman's rights, it is unlikely she would be so well regarded today, but despite her archaic political views, she shared the Ames women's passion for supporting a variety of good causes. For example, in 1896 in memory of her father she joined with other family members to give the beautiful oak screen and pulpit at Unity Church. The work was designed by Boston architect Henry Vaughn and carved by the German artist Kirchmayer. In 1903 she donated the land for the North Easton Fire Station, now the Children's Museum.

Mrs. Frothingham was devoted to the children of the town. As early as 1914 she continued the family custom of a Christmas party for all North Easton Grammar School

children. This included a decorated tree, a magician, refreshments, and a gift for each child. She also gave money so that students in other Easton schools could receive gifts as well. When a new grammar school was needed for North Easton in 1916, she and her brothers Frederick Lothrop and John S. Ames, Sr. gave \$40,000 for the building in memory of their parents.

Her interest in education extended to the Ames Free Library. She became a member of the Board of Directors in 1900 and served as Library President from 1929 to 1955. One of her first duties as President was the supervision of the Children's Room addition given by Mrs. William H. Ames in memory of her husband in 1931.

Early in her life Mrs. Frothingham had met Clara Barton, the founder of the Red Cross, and they remained friends until Miss Barton's death. Mrs. Frothingham led establishment of the Easton Red Cross chapter and from World War I through World War II she served as its president. In 1920 her interest in the Red Cross and her husband's desire to find a home for the American Legion of which he was a founder led them to buy the Anna C. Ames gymnasium on Barrows Street.

They had additions built on each end of the building with the southern end reserved for the Legion. In the northern end there were lockers and showers for the high school boys who used the gym. Many Red Cross members still fondly remember the all day knitting and sewing sessions at this building. Although Mrs. Frothingham never knitted, she would often be found on her hands and knees picking up thread and pins.

Mary Frothingham's life darkened on August 23, 1928 when her husband died suddenly. She decided to create a living memorial for her beloved husband. She established the Louis A. Frothingham Memorial Corporation which built her most lasting contribution to Easton, Frothingham Memorial Park. The Memorial Corporation also renovated the Anna C. Ames Hall in 1930 when the new High School Gym and the break up of the original Anna C. Ames band made the building obsolete. She had most of the athletic equipment removed, and the north wing became a game room for young people. The new plan opened the rooms at the back to make a parlor where clubs could hold their meetings along with a fully equipped kitchen including china and silverware. The building, renamed Frothingham Memorial Hall, still serves today as the headquarters for the Easton YMCA.

Prior to the opening of Frothingham Park, High School and neighborhood sports took place at the Plains, formerly Lathrop's Plain, the area off Lincoln Street around Militia Park. Militia Park, dedicated as part of the town's Revolutionary Bicentennial Celebration, was originally a training field for Easton's militia. The first Oliver Ames High School football game took place there in the fall of 1926. Baseball has been played there even longer. Kay Healey, a long time teacher in Easton schools, remembered her father, born in 1867, telling stories of ball games played there in his youth. Today's Little Leaguers playing at the Plains are using a field more closely associated with the birth of baseball than the largely mythical contribution of Abner Doubleday.

Frothingham Park is still one of the treasures of Easton as anyone who has watched a sporting event or attended an Oliver Ames High School graduation there can attest. The Park, dedicated in October of 1930, was designed by Joseph Lee, the President of the Playground Association of America. Stone and Webster, the same company which built Harvard Stadium, constructed the concrete stands. The original plan had a small pond just beyond the tennis courts with boys' apparatus on one side and girls' on the other. This

small pond was filled in 1936.

An extremely interested participant in this building was John J. Williams, then a boy spending the summer with his grandmother on Sheridan Street. He writes:

I recall Power Brothers (of Brockton) in 1930 turning Goward's Pond (a real quagmire) into today's lovely Frothingham Park. They used real STEAM shovels and STEAM rollers. I was 9 at the time and used my first toy wheelbarrow to help Ray Keohane, Clerk of the Works, to build the Grandstand. He [was] later a Corps of Engineers Captain [who] was killed at the Battle of the Bulge in World War II.

Since 1930 only three men have been in charge of maintaining the Park in its splendid condition. The first was John C. Mason (1930-1961) who was followed by Frederick A. Coe (1961-1972). The current Park Superintendent is Robert J. "Buddy" Wooster.

Like most spots in town, the park had a long history behind it before Mrs. Frothingham came on the scene. A grandson of the last owner wrote:

Frothingham Park was formerly the property of Josiah Goward and the land stretched from Center Street. Quite a few years ago the land bordering Sheridan Street was sold for house lots and then several years later the Goward Estate sold the land to Mrs. Frothingham for the park.

Goward's Pond was located about where the athletic field is now and was shaped like a figure 8 each section being about 200 feet across with a 20 foot spread at the narrows. The pond was situated on about an east to west location. The west end of the pond had a spring in it and this kept the water in the whole pond through the year. It was really a made pond, for Josiah Francis Goward needed ice for keeping beef in his slaughterhouse. The slaughterhouse and house were located about 250 feet from the pond. I remember seeing the area after the park was created, and a large boulder was still there. The eastern end of the pond was about 250 ft from this boulder. Along with the slaughterhouse, across the road was a smoke house where hams and bacon were cured. There always was a narrow road leading from Center Street to the whole area. The Goward Homestead on Center Street [63 Center Street] was fenced off when the property was sold. That part of the fence on the park border is just about where the smoke house stood.

When I was a young boy that was a playground for us kids too. I think my grandfather died around 1898 and the great big barn, slaughter house, and ice house fell into disrepair because of non-use. The pond contained pickerel, sunfish, and hornpout; and it was my fishing area all through my youth. In winter it was skating and hockey. The western end was quite deep and muddy, but the eastern end was not over 4 feet at high water. A dam was built at the eastern end from which the water ran into a brook; the brook continued down through the corner of the homestead property (that vacant grove on Center Street) and then under the road itself and on down to the railroad tracks.

The Park quickly replaced the Plains as the athletic center of town. In the 1930's a twilight league of town baseball teams used the Park during the week. On Sunday's the best players from this league joined together to represent the Town versus outside teams. The players made a strange impression since they each wore their team's twilight league uniforms. In 1939 the team was criticized for their motley appearance after a game in Norwood. Connie Spillane, Bill Baxter, and the other town team members resolved to appear in a town uniform the following year. For some reason, the name Easton Huskies was chosen, and for the last fifty-five years, the Huskies have represented our town with the Park as their home field. When the Huskies won the State Championship in 1993 under Coach Bobby Wooster, founding members Connie Spillane and Bill Baxter were

still active members of the team's management.

Mrs. Frothingham outlived her husband by twenty-seven years, and for all that time she followed a seldom varied routine when she was in Easton. At 10 A.M. she drove to Unity Church, then the Village Cemetery, the Ames Free Library, Frothingham Memorial Hall, and finally the Park. At each stop she would walk through and discuss daily happenings with the person in charge. In the afternoon, unless it was Friday during Boston Symphony season, she would walk through Wayside with the Estate Superintendent, John Luke, discussing her gardens. Her rose garden which won widespread recognition was her special pride. Mrs. Frothingham died on May 5, 1955. After five years in limbo, her estate became our Town Office with the stipulation, thanks to her sister-in-law Mrs. John Ames, Sr., that the building and grounds facing Elm Street would never be altered.

The last of our famous Ames women, Elise Ames, was also an avid gardener, but her love of nature went beyond her home plot to becoming the pioneer conservationist of Easton. Mrs. Parker, the daughter of Oliver Ames (1864-1929), grew up on the "Sheep Pasture" estate built for her father in 1893. In 1917 she married William Amory Parker, a pioneer of the modern mutual fund industry. After her marriage she moved to "Unity Close," the house built for her great grandfather on Main Street in 1863, and lived there the rest of her life. The Parkers renovated the house and constantly improved the grounds. Perhaps the most extensive change came in 1951 when the old Ames Countinghouse was torn down and a Mr. Whitman of Olmsted's firm laid out the avenue and the lawn on the south side of the house.

The Parkers continued the family tradition of supporting North Easton's churches. In the mid-1950's she donated 14.6 acres on Lincoln Street to the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church for a new church in memory, it is said, of one of her gardeners Charles Lawson. The Parkers were especially generous to Unity Church. The beautiful chimes of the church were given in memory of their sons who predeceased their parents.

Mrs. Parker and her husband also helped preserve the historical assets of North Easton. In 1969 Mr. Parker along with John S. Ames, Jr., David Ames, and Senator Oliver F. Ames purchased and donated the North Easton Railroad Station to the Historical Society. The following year she organized the family purchase of Queset which saved that remarkable building from destruction. The terms of her will also gave a large donation for the preservation of the Oakes Ames Memorial Hall.

Her greatest gifts touched on conservation and recreation. She was an original trustee of Frothingham Memorial Park, serving from 1930 to 1972; she was President of the Board from 1956 to 1972. The Parkers supported the acquisition of Wheaton Farm and the establishment of the Natural Resource Trust. In 1964 the Parkers gave the first open space acquired by the Conservation Commission to honor the memory of their son Oliver who died in World War II. This gift of forty-one acres on the south side of Lincoln Street adjoins the Town Forest. The next year Mrs. Parker gave sixty-four acres called the Picker Field to the town. This property is next to the Town Pool. During the 250th Anniversary of the town, the celebration committee built a bike path connecting the Parker donations and the Town Forest, so that the people of Easton could more easily enjoy this natural beauty. Mrs. Parker's last and most valuable gift was about one hundred acres at her childhood home of "Sheep Pasture" given, with an endowment, to the Natural Resources Trust for environmental education. Another fifty acres along the

Queset River at the old estate are protected from development by the first conservation restriction in Easton. Although the mansion was torn down in 1946, "Sheep Pasture" continues to honor the generosity of Elise Ames Parker, a shy woman who did as much to shape the landscape of late Twentieth Century Easton as her patriarchs did in the Nineteenth.

While several of the Ames family are still active in Easton today, the death of Mrs. Parker in 1979 represented the end of an era. The Ames Shovel Company that had been a fixture of the village for more than a century disappeared from North Easton within her lifetime. The change began in 1931 when the Ames Shovel and Tool Company reorganized and combined with other plants as the Ames, Baldwin, and Wyoming Company. The next year, the main office of the Company moved to Parkersburg, West Virginia. The Easton works, however, continued in production. The Company product line grew to five thousand different items including all types of garden tools.

The only other major employer in North Easton at this time was Stedfast Rubber Company. In 1924 Abraham Sydeman founded Stedfast in Boston. The company moved to North Easton in 1930 when it bought the General Electric plant which had been erected during World War I at the corner of Oliver and Elm Streets as well as the old Gilmore Hinge property. The company made shoe lining and continued in operation until the early 1980's. Stedfast's old building is now the headquarters for Mr. Douglas King.

In 1952 the end for the Ames Company finally came. The North Easton plant began to close down. After a period of non-use the factory was sold to Tofias Real Estate of Brockton in 1972. Today the old factory is the quiet home to several small businesses.

The key to success for old Oliver Ames was his control of the water power of the Queset. A symbol of the profound change that had come to North Easton was the Great Flood of 1968. Six inches of rain fell onto frozen ground during the morning and afternoon of March 18, 1968, but there was no Ames Company's patrolling and shoring up the dams as there had been in 1886. Shortly after 5:30 P.M., a large section of Flyaway Pond Dam collapsed unleashing an estimated 350,000 tons of water on North Easton. The burst of water uprooted trees, washed away cars, overturned two loaded freight cars and damaged houses. One car moved 500 yards from Main Street to near the old Fire Station on Sullivan Avenue. The torrent destroyed a fifty-foot section of retaining wall at the Ames Free Library. Police closed a dozen roads due to severe damage. Problems downstream in South Easton were minimized when the Morse Dam at Central Street unexpectedly held up against the torrent.

And so, the control of even the forces of nature that characterized the Ames Shovel Company was gone. Over the quarter century since the Great Flood, retail and residential development in Easton has concentrated in the south and west. Today, North Easton is less influential as other neighborhoods have grown to challenge its preeminence. Yet even a diehard resident of South Easton or Poquanticut would find it hard to deny the primacy of North Easton as the social center of the town. Government services, schools, many churches, and its historic district still make it the neighborhood Eastoners are most familiar with after their own. Town Meeting and the annual round of events at the High School, the Easton Huskies at Frothingham Memorial Park and the Lions Club's Celebration of the Holiday Season all help to reaffirm the sense of community any town needs to survive.