

South Easton

Where is South Easton? For some it is the whole of Easton south of Summer Street and east of Bay Road. In 1746 the town government more or less agreed with this interpretation when it divided the town into three school districts: Southwest, Southeast and Northeast. Today, most people believe that Stonehill College is in North Easton, but the Cemetery on the west side of Washington Street, right in the heart of Stonehill property, is known as the South Easton Cemetery. For us, with nine other neighborhoods to discuss, South Easton will be something of a gerrymander, like the current electoral districts in town! Starting at Stonehill and the South Easton Cemetery, it flows south squeezing between Eastondale and Easton Center until it finally ends at the Hayward-Pool neighborhood. It is a neighborhood that for almost two centuries has shown two faces to the world. One is the bustle of commercial life along what is now Route 138 while the other is the quiet, formerly agricultural, now residential area to the west.

South Easton, particularly the Stonehill College campus, is the meeting place of most of Easton's interesting geological features, so it is perhaps appropriate to pause and look at a few things that deeply underlie the human history of Easton. The sand and stones we have to deal with when we dig our gardens every spring are gifts of the last glacier, but this complex jumble is mere frosting on the cake of a much older story hidden in the bedrock.

Beneath the surface Easton can be divided into five sections. In the extreme northeast corner behind the pond on Union Street the bedrock is a dark grayish-green igneous rock called Salem Gabbrodiiorite. This rock formed more than 600 million years ago as fiery magma boiled up from beneath the earth. For at least thirty million years a process of cooling, cracking and new surges of hot magma continued. This rock is among the oldest on earth dating from the Pre-Cambrian period when no life existed on the surface of the earth.

A later surge of magma probably produced the younger stone called Dedham Granodiorite which intrudes into the older rocks before becoming the dominant bedrock feature of North Easton. Two forms of this stone exist. One is a pink coarse grained stone. The other is light gray due to contact with other igneous rocks. The southern boundary of this formation runs from the town's western border more or less straight to just east of Center Street immediately north of Summer Street and then northeast in an arc around a very special volcanic formation to be mentioned in a moment.

These two newly cooled rock formations would not become part of New England until two hundred million years after their formation. Our most educated guess today indicates that they were once part of an underwater plateau attached to the coast of North Africa. As the continents drifted around the surface of the earth, our little section, called Avalonia by geologists, broke away from Africa and drifted almost a thousand miles before it hit what was then the shore of New England about four hundred million years ago. Twenty million years or so later, Avalonia really got welded to New England when it was squashed during a collision between Europe and North America. This crash crumpled the earth like a car bumper creating the mountains of New England which today have mostly eroded to hills.

Ninety million years later another crash occurred when Africa itself smashed into the east coast of the future United States. As Africa approached, the sea floor was forced

under us causing a line of volcanoes to appear. Perhaps it was then or during an earlier collision when Easton captured its own volcanic island. Today the remains of this volcano can be seen as dense dark grayish-green bedrock running from the Brockton line at Monte's Pond south to Stonehill just north of Stone House Hill, then southwest past the South Easton Cemetery off Route 138, next southwest again to just east of Center Street, and then in an arc northeast crossing Main Street at about Pond Street before finally crossing Washington Street again just south of Elm Street. On Stonehill property the rock shows well developed bands where the lava once flowed.

The collision with Africa also created what we call the Blue Hills. At that time, however, those hills were mountains as tall as the Alps or even the Himalayas. Erosion from those mountains and earlier ones filled a large basin of swampy land which accounts for Easton's other two bedrock features.

The first is called the Wamsutta Formation. It forms a band less than a quarter mile wide running from Brockton across Stonehill before crossing Washington Street at the South Easton Cemetery. It then crosses Center Street just north of Short Street and Bay Road at Summer Street. The Wamsutta is chiefly a red sandstone created in an area of slowly moving fresh water. The evidence points to swampy land that alternately dried out and flooded about 300 to 305 million years ago. Occasionally, there are bands of a gray pebble-containing stone called Conglomerate which formed in slowly moving stream beds that flowed through the swamp. Although the Wamsutta Formation is estimated to be 500 feet thick, very little of it appears on the surface. One place where there is a prominent outcropping is near Stone House Hill where someone quarried the sandstone to make millstones. This quarry has stones five feet across in various stages of completion. No one knows for certain who started the quarry or when it began, but the fine grained stone might have made an effective grindstone in an area where good mill stones had to be imported from Europe. Recent research by Karl West of Foxboro shows that John Dailey, who came to Easton before 1708, sold land in this area to John Randall, miller, in 1736. Chaffin noted that this branch of the Randall family erected a gristmill in North Easton village before 1760, so perhaps Randall is the creator of this mysterious quarry.

The Wamsutta Formation grades into the Rhode Island Formation which stretches across the whole southern part of the town. The Rhode Island Formation also developed in a humid, fresh water environment for as many as ten million years after the Wamsutta Formation was deposited. This more recent formation is as much as a thousand feet thick. It consists of intermixed gray sandstone, gray pebble conglomerate, gray to black shale, and a form of anthracite coal. The coal was formed from swamp vegetation that lived about 295 million years ago. Forty species of vegetation from that time have been discovered in Easton. The animal life of the time consisted of amphibians, spiders, at least twelve species of cockroaches and several lesser known species. The conglomerates of the Rhode Island Formation are best seen at Easton Center where they have given rise to the legend of the Devil's Footprint. Coal is still found in the western part of town where deeds from the early 1800's often mention mineral rights for the anticipated coal mining boom.

All of this extremely ancient history was unknown to the earliest settlers who believed the world was created only about 6000 years before their arrival here. In a sense they were not far wrong because the land they dealt with was a legacy of the last glacier which retreated from Easton around 15,000 years ago.

That glacier created a feature that brought the first settlers to South Easton. This feature is Simpson Spring located on the southeastern side of a glacial ridge called an esker. The sheltered location and year round source of pure cool water attracted Native Americans who left numerous artifacts in the area. The current name for the spring comes from Samuel D. Simpson who bought the property after 1800 and operated a business there for many years. Prior to Simpson's arrival the spring was called the Ridge Hill Spring.

The first settler to live near the spring was William Hayward who arrived from Braintree. His family was one of the seven families of squatters who, along with Clement Briggs, were here by 1694. His home was located about 200 feet southeast of Simpson Spring. Since the original spring is now enclosed in the north end of the Simpson Spring building, this would place Hayward's home site in the woods on the left of the access road as one enters. Hayward died when he was only 31 on March 26, 1697. His wife and two children returned to Braintree. William Hayward, Junior, probably the first white child born in our town, succeeded to his father's property when he came of age in 1718.

Other settlers quickly moved into the land west and north of Eastondale. William Manley, another head of one of the seven families of squatters, settled on the east side of the future Washington Street, a little south of the CVS Pharmacy (620 Washington Street). John Phillips, still another of the earliest settlers, lived on the northeast corner of Belmont and Washington Streets. He was the first to control the future Morse mill privilege where the Queset River passes under Central Street. Thomas Randall, 2nd, who came from Weymouth with his father by 1694, built a house north of John Phillips when he married in January, 1697. Other early settlers in this area built homes north of Stone House Hill on Stonehill College property. John Drake moved to town with his father in 1700 and built on the Brockton line in 1703. In 1704 or perhaps slightly earlier James Hodge also settled in the same area.

A rudimentary road system developed connecting the neighborhood. Church Street, long known as the Cynthia Drake Road, was a travelled path soon after the first settlement. It was formally laid out as a road in 1697. The first road to be officially laid out by the Selectmen of the new town of Easton was the precursor of Belmont Street which was located a few rods north of the present road. This event occurred on September 30, 1726. Later that same day part of Washington Street from South Easton Green to the future South Easton Cemetery was also surveyed. Washington Street from the Green to Dailey's Corner (junction of Main and Washington Streets) is mentioned as a footpath in records before 1700, but the section from the cemetery to Dailey's Corner wasn't officially laid out as a road until 1737. The road south of South Easton Green (junction of Washington and Depot Street) was created in 1807 by the Stoughton Turnpike Association to join with the turnpike though Eastondale. The Stoughton Turnpike changed the route of the original Washington Street to one that more closely approximates the current one. There was no toll house or gate for this road in Easton. The road eventually came back under town control. In 1895 Washington Street was designated as the Town's first state highway.

The Church Street area was the Town's first government center. At that time the Congregational church and the state were united in a near theocracy. In 1719 the Proprietors of the Taunton North Purchase set apart six acres of land for a burying place and training ground for the militia, the colonial national guard, at "Cranberry Meadow

Meeting-House Plane." This tells us that the early settlers in town had already erected a meeting house despite not being an officially sanctioned precinct legally authorized to support a church through taxation. The meeting house was mentioned in a 1716 deed, but most believe that this combination church and community center was erected in 1713 when Elder William Pratt was called to head up the newly gathered parish in the east end of Taunton North Purchase.

At that time the future Easton had twenty-six families, but it had no separate political identity because it was still a part of Norton which itself had only recently separated from Taunton in 1711. Therefore, a number of our citizens banded together to offer twenty-two acres of land as an incentive for Elder William Pratt to relocate here as their religious leader. Pious and already well-to-do, Pratt accepted the offer. His home was just south of John Phillips' land near, but a little west of, the Morse Factory on Central Street.

Pratt brought with him two slaves, the first known African-Americans to live in our town. He probably had brought them from Charleston, South Carolina where he had previously lived. These two young people named Heber and Hagar were probably married. After Elder Pratt's death they continued to serve the widow until she freed them in February, 1722. At that time she gave them ten acres of land which she had bought from Daniel Owen east of Bay Road. The newly freed family set a high example for the community; Heber is referred to in early records as Heber Honesty or Honestman. Hagar died in childbirth before 1735 when Heber married Susanna Cordner of Bridgewater. He apparently left town in 1740.

While the wealthy citizens presented Elder Pratt with land, most of the early settlers probably pitched in to raise the meeting house for him to preach in. This building was located on the north side of Church Street at the east end of the burying ground. Elder Pratt did not long enjoy the benefits of this rude edifice because he died in January, 1714 becoming the first burial in the cemetery outside his church.

Religion in Easton then languished for nine years as the settlers fought to establish themselves as a legally separate precinct. Formal precinct meetings began in the little meeting house on May 13, 1718, but the area legally became a precinct only on January 19, 1722. The following year, Reverend Matthew Short was called to minister to the Easton congregation.

As with most early churches, the building Short was called to preach in had no heat and most windows were covered with parchment paper or left bare. In 1726 the new town of Easton voted ten pounds to buy glass and lumber to finish the meeting house and glaze some of the windows. Reverend Mr. Short enjoyed these new amenities until his untimely death at age 43 in 1731. Short Street is named in his honor.

Short was succeeded by the Reverend Joseph Belcher. A 1723 Harvard graduate, he began his ministry in 1731 and continued until he was fired in 1744. Tradition holds that he became partially insane and read sermon after sermon on Sunday even after all the parishioners had left stopping only at sunset. He remained in Easton until 1754 and either his insanity was intermittent or the town found a use for someone willing to talk from sunrise to sunset, for Belcher taught school after his dismissal from the ministry.

Belcher was succeeded by the belligerent Solomon Prentice who became involved in the memorable church controversy over building a new meeting house at Easton Center. On November 12, 1750 after the new meeting house was completed, the old meeting house was torn down. Thus, the center of power moved from and never returned to

Meeting House Plain. The old burial ground associated with the original meeting house continued in use for about fifty years before it too was left to the hands of Nineteenth Century vandals. In fact, the fear of vandalism became so great that several people, including Reverend Mr. Short, were reinterred elsewhere.

Industry was slow to develop in this neighborhood. Sometime between 1739 and 1747 Daniel Williams built a dam and sawmill to create a smaller version of today's Morse's Pond north of Central Street just west of Route 138. Williams was a prominent local official who sided with King George III in the early stages of the Revolutionary period. His son, Daniel, Jr., was the only person expelled from town for his Tory views. Daniel Williams, Sr. continued to run the sawmill for many years probably until his death in 1782,

Another dam was also built further up the Queset River west of Eisenhower Drive. Its story proved a real challenge to Chaffin in his *History of Easton* a century ago. Only the chance discovery of some long lost documents revealed the true story.

Chaffin wrote:

Some distance above the Morse privilege about west of the Macombers [509 Washington Street] another dam was built at one time. No definite information can be given about the date of its construction or its precise purpose. Samuel Simpson was told by Daniel Randall, Sr. many years ago that three men named Orr, Barclay, and Adams erected the dam. The Mr. Orr was probably Hugh Orr, who came from Scotland in 1740...and engaged there [Bridgewater] in the iron manufacture; the Barclay was William Barclay who settled in Easton; and the Adams was probably William Adams...The fact that Hugh Orr engaged in various kinds of iron manufacture, and that William Barclay worked for Eliphalet Leonard, Jr. in the manufacture of firearms are sufficient reasons for assuming that they meant to erect here a foundry or furnace.

Chaffin used the tax records of William Barclay to estimate a date of between 1757 and 1767 for the dam. He noted also:

Why this enterprise was abandoned when the dam was constructed is a matter of conjecture only. It may be it interfered with the Daniel Williams privilege below. It may be also that Williams had the right to raise the dam, and so raised it as to make the upper privilege untenable...One thing is certain,—the dam was constructed and may now be seen, with the site of its sluiceway, when Morse's Pond is at low water. A road...once went over this dam, connecting Washington Street with Short Street, and running past the Lyman Wheelock house, which was for awhile an inn. It was known as the Scotch Dam.

This means that the current Scotch Dam Road is exactly perpendicular to the original road and that the current Lyman Wheelock Road is actually near the roadbed of the original lane. This passage from Chaffin is filled with speculation and lacks his usual authoritative tone. He was clearly at a loss to explain this mysterious dam, but he wanted to point the way for future research. That research was done by Kenneth Howell and Einar Carlson in their 1980 *Men of Iron*.

There they reveal the account books of not William Adams but John Adam, Senior. Adam was born in Scotland in 1714 and came to Easton in 1737. In 1794 the elderly Adam wrote:

My account book No. 1 was first used to keep accounts as blacksmith two years when Messers. Orr and Barclay and myself sett up a blacksmith shop in 1737 and part of 1738 and part of 1739 until full two years were completed. Then Mr. Hugh Orr moved to Bridgewater and Mr. Barclay continued to work in the said shop by

Dicon Thomas Randall [2nd].

Howell and Carlson add that the shop was rented, at least originally, from Randall. They also state that:

in order to finance the Adam and Orr blacksmith shop, they borrowed 25 pounds old tenor from Joshua Hayward on Nov. 13, 1739.... They promised to repay the loan in one year in 'marchandable barr iron.'

These new facts raise as many questions as they answer. A blacksmith shop did not need a dam for operations. Why was the work carried on only part time in 1738 and 1739? Why after two years of operation did the partners need to borrow a substantial sum of money? The answer may be in their offer to repay in bar iron. It may be the partners operated the rented blacksmith shop while they built the dam in 1738 and 1739. At the end of 1739 with the dam completed, the partners may have borrowed the money to complete the erection of an iron forge with its large trip hammer which would have allowed them to produce more cheaply the bar iron needed to pay off their debt. We do not know what happened next other than that Hugh Orr left for Bridgewater while Adam and Barclay apparently continued to work at the dam.

The blacksmith shop was adjacent to Thomas Randall's home. Adam rented a room there during his entire twelve year sojourn in Easton. Adam's account book reveals substantial blacksmithing work for Captain Eliphalet Leonard, Sr. including repairing equipment for Leonard's forge in North Easton. In September, 1749 Adam left Easton and built a house in Taunton. In November of that year he returned to Easton to claim his bride, Sarah, the daughter of his old client Captain Eliphalet Leonard.

With the departure of Adam, the dam at what became the Morse privilege was soon alone again as the only power source on this part of the Queset River. After Daniel Williams' death in 1782, the site passed through many hands. In 1792 it was owned by Eliphalet Leonard, Jr. according to Chaffin although it may have been the third Eliphalet who purchased it. In 1793 the third Eliphalet was building the dam to create Shovel Shop Pond, so, like Captain Oliver Ames after him, he may have been attempting to control all the mill privileges on the Queset.

At any rate, Josiah Copeland, another man with the dream of controlling the mill rights on the lower Queset, bought the old sawmill in 1797 and operated it until he turned it over to Hiram Copeland about 1825. In 1802 Josiah Copeland moved an old building from Windmill Hill to the dam and opened a linseed oil mill.

By the turn of the Nineteenth Century the Industrial Revolution was about to start in America. The first industry to be mechanized was the textile industry because working with wool and cotton did not require heavy machinery. Thus, the forward looking Copeland added a wool carding machine to his oil mill. This machine replaced hand labor on the slowest and most strenuous part of wool cloth production by straightening the wool fibers and rolling them into lengths suitable for spinning at home.

In 1810 Copeland and four others formed a partnership to make cotton thread at the dam. In that same year a court order forced the Town to improve Central Street to an official road aiding transportation to the mill. The partners enlarged the old oil mill and set up five spinning frames with sixty spindles in each frame. Samuel Slater, an English immigrant, had introduced the thread mill to America in 1793. These mills became quite common in southeastern Massachusetts until about twenty years later when Francis Cabot

Lowell devised the integrated factory making cloth from raw cotton in a single large factory.

Little factories like Copeland's usually employed young women or even children to run the spinning machines with men as overseers. Chaffin notes that Rufus Fuller, one of Copeland's partners, was the superintendent of this factory at the sum of a dollar and a half a day.

Power was quite limited at this site. The thread mill got first priority for water. Copeland got to use any surplus for his sawmill between October 15 and June 1, and the wool carding machine got the surplus the rest of the year which was sheep shearing time.

The factory prospered during the War of 1812, but increased British competition after the war forced it to close in 1817. At that time David Manley bought the factory, probably for the Easton Manufacturing Company. Whether he operated the thread mill is unknown. By 1830 Shepard Leach, the iron master from Furnace Village, owned the factory.

It was the next owner, Edward J. W. Morse (1809-1865), who would turn this part of the neighborhood into the heart of South Easton. Morse came to Easton in 1829 and soon was making cotton thread in a small factory just south of the Leach Foundry in Furnace Village. In February, 1837 he bought a quarter interest in the old Copeland Factory in South Easton from the estate of General Leach. E.J.W. Morse never gained complete control of this factory himself, but his son Edward N. Morse (1831-1889) bought out the final partner in April, 1856. The Morses also owned plants in Norton, Kingston, and New Hampshire.

The Morses aimed to produce quality thread rather than compete with the giant producers of coarser threads and cloth in places like Lowell. They used combed sea island cotton which was only produced in a narrow strip of land on the South Carolina coast around and to the north of Hilton Head. This premium cotton had exceptionally long fibers which made it ideal for spinning into fine strong thread for use in tasks like lace making or for the warp threads of high quality fabrics for the upper classes. By 1840 this cotton accounted for only one percent of the total cotton crop in America, and almost all of it was shipped to England. To get this treasure family members, beginning with the founder E.J. W. Morse, travelled to South Carolina each winter. The cotton was shipped in sailing vessels to Scituate and taken by ox-cart to the factories

The company expanded with the addition of a supplemental steam engine in 1844. As the business grew, Morse purchased a number of houses in the area probably for his workers. Sometime after 1860 the original factory, a lovely example of wood frame Federal Style industrial architecture, was supplemented by the current brick factory. By the 1880's the E.J. W. Morse Company called itself the oldest cotton thread company in America. It employed about fifty people and used "as expensive and complete a system of machinery as is now in use in any similar business." In 1894 a large fire at the factory required the help of the Brockton Fire Department to extinguish. It was probably at this time that the original wooden factory was destroyed. By 1900 the company was without any competitor in America, but in that year the Morses sold to the American Thread Company, part of a giant trust called J.& P. Coates of Scotland. This monopoly shut down the Easton factory. Today Coates and Clark is still the world's leading producer of quality cotton thread.

The grandson of the founder, Alfred B. Morse(1861-1932), became Easton's premier

inventor with around eighty patterns. In 1882 he built a steam yacht that was ingenious enough to attract the attention of Reverend Mr. Chaffin. Morse later patented many innovations in thread making including "Silkateen", a cotton thread that looks like silk and the first lace making machine to be patented in America.

With the thread company gone, Morse used the old factory and a new one he built across the street for his new business, the Easton Machine Company. This business built lace machines, candy-making machines, machine tools, and universal joints for trucks, cars and submarines.

The most famous product of the Easton Machine Company was the Morse Car. Sometime between 1898 and 1900, Morse designed and built an experimental automobile with an air cooled, rear end mounted engine. After repairing a few cars brought from Boston, Alfred Morse decided his design was better. He was right. Between 1900 (or 1902) and 1907 he made about ten two cylinder front engined runabouts. Beginning about 1907, a four cylinder model replaced the earlier version. About four dozen of these new machines were made. The chassis and drive train were made in Easton, but the bodies were made to order by A. J. Judkins in Amesbury, Massachusetts. This car combined the best engineering features of European cars with Morse innovations. The most important of these new features was the valve-in-head engine. An overhead valve was not an original idea with Morse, but he was apparently the first to perfect it for passenger car use. Today, this is how most automobile engines are built, but Morse was thirty years ahead of his time. Tradition holds that Buick paid the Morse family for the patent rights when they reintroduced the idea in the late 1930's. Also, Cadillac paid Morse \$5,000 for Morse's patented disc plate clutch.

Production of the Morse ended with the First World War when quality metal castings produced only by the Krupp Steel Company in Germany became unavailable. Mass production by such makers as Ford also provided insurmountable competition for a man like Morse who was unwilling to lower his standards.

The unassembled Morses were put in storage until the Depression. At this point Alfred Morse's son, Neubert (1896-1977) decided to "clean house." He sold the crated parts retaining eight assembled cars. In 1937, Neubert who had been living in the house now occupied by the Kane Funeral Home at 605 Washington Street decided to use the site of the storage barn for his home (the lovely Colonial Revival home at 573 Washington Street) and sold six of the remaining eight cars for scrap. Both remaining cars, one a two cylinder, Model A, and the other a four cylinder Model B, continue to be driven today. The two cylinder returned to an Easton owner in 1994. Rumors of a third extant Morse have circulated for years, but all have so far proven to be another early car called a Mors. The old Morse factory was later used by the Brockton Tool Company. Today the beautiful old building stands largely unused due to a lack of parking facilities which would encourage constructive reuse.

In 1923 NeubertMorse started a gear making business in the building across from the old thread factory on the south side of Central Street. This corporation was called the Charles E. Crofoot Gear Corporation since Neubert Morse had acquired part of the defunct Crofoot Gear Works in Readville.

Edward J. W. Morse was dependent on cotton for his industry. In his time cotton meant slavery. Morse, on his trips to South Carolina, had an opportunity to observe the "peculiar institution" of slavery first hand. What Morse thought of slavery is unknown,

but his near neighbor was Easton's most vociferous abolitionist, Dr. Caleb Swan.

Dr. Swan was born in Charlestown, Massachusetts in 1793. Swan graduated from Harvard in 1814 and commenced the study of medicine with Dr. Jonathan Wales of Randolph. He began his practice in Easton in 1816 and continued it until his death in 1870. Swan was a homeopathic doctor which means that he treated diseases with small doses of medicines that in large doses would cause symptoms similar to the disease itself. Even in his time this was not standard practice, and he was dropped from the Massachusetts Medical Society. However, the people of Easton and surrounding towns had confidence in him, and he built a large practice. He owned several houses in the neighborhood, but his home was located on the site of today's Easton Marketplace.

In 1826 he became an active supporter of the temperance movement, not an unusual thing for a doctor, but for Swan it was only a first step in promoting liberal reforms. In the following year he was elected to the School Committee where he served for fourteen years. He was a strong supporter of public education and frequently spoke on the subject.

In 1840 he supported the election of the Whig candidate William Henry Harrison "at the same time declaring that if Harrison was elected he would join the Liberty Party," which later became known as the Free Soil Party. He kept his promise and became an ardent anti-slavery man running unsuccessfully for both Congress and Governor on the Free Soil Ticket. Through his efforts the Free Soil Party achieved electoral success in 1852 replacing the Whigs as the town's dominant party.

Swan's victory was brief. In 1854, the so-called Know-Nothing Party "swept over Easton like wildfire," according to Chaffin. Swan battled the openly prejudiced Know-Nothing Party. Despite that group's penchant for secrecy, Swan always seemed to know what went on at their meetings, but the nativists certainly doomed Swan's chances for election. In 1858 he received only eleven votes in Easton out of over three hundred and fifty cast. Although his political causes were noble ones, the most important result of Swan's political career from his family's perspective was his daughter Ruth's marriage to Justin Morrill, an United States Senator from Vermont, in 1851.

Swan did more than talk about abolition. Apparently, he was a conductor aiding slaves in their escape on the Underground Railroad. One tradition indicates that he used a building across from his home, probably today's 579 Washington Street, to hide fugitive slaves. On the other hand, writing in 1886, D.C. Lille indicates that the fugitives actually were hidden in Swan's now vanished home. Whatever the location, the escapees were fed and, if necessary, given money and clothing before they were sent on their way. Other town legends tell of others' hiding fugitives in homes along Bay Road or in Poquanticut.

Another interesting Nineteenth Century family in this part of the neighborhood was the Macombers. The beautiful home at 509 Washington Street was built by David Macomber who had served as a musician in the War of 1812. Later it was the home of the musical Macomber sisters, twins who played stringed instruments for the travelling shows of Covert and Dodge during the years after the Civil War.

Schools made an early appearance in South Easton. In fact, the first schoolhouse in Easton was built on Purchase Street in 1770. Prior to this, schools had been kept in various private homes. In 1773 another school was built on or near the future site of Copeland's store at the northwest corner of Central and Washington Streets. It was very small with low walls and a hip roof. Chaffin notes that "Old Bunn", Benjamin Benoni, a French Canadian or part Canadian Indian, lived in the old school after it had been

abandoned. Old Bunn arrived in Easton during the French and Indian War, about 1759. Living on the edge of poverty, he supported his family by wood carving and thievery. The family lived in a number of abandoned buildings throughout town. He and a son served in the Revolution, but after that war he finally slipped into poverty and petitioned the state to get the town to support him and his family. The last record of that support is May 18, 1787, but the little school wasn't replaced with a new one until 1794, so the Benoni family somehow seem to have struggled along for several years without aid.

In 1794 the new school was built near the road on the site of the old School Administration Offices (580 Washington Street). In 1821 the district erected a new brick building on the same site. That, in turn, was replaced in 1848. The 1848 school was expanded after 1886 and served until 1904. In that year it was moved and converted to a private dwelling which still stands to the north of Plymouth Crossing. The current building on the site was built in 1904. The 1913 Town Report indicated, "The school building at South Easton is recognized by school administrators and architects as one of the best in the country." Its three classrooms held two grades per room. In 1972 this beautiful little building became the School Administration Offices. In a short-sighted move brought on by Proposition 2 1/2 constraints, the town privatized the building in the 1980's. It first became the home of JLK Realty which extensively remodeled the interior; currently it houses a branch of the People's Savings Bank.

Today, Route 138 in South Easton has become one of the most important business districts in town. This is not a recent development. The previously mentioned Copeland's store dated to the very early Nineteenth Century when the turnpike flourished. Throughout the century traffic increased on the road as it was then a main route from Boston to Taunton, Fall River and Newport. In this century commercial development has become so rapid and complex that it is beyond the scope of this essay to detail most of it. However, a few business sites have been around for so long or have such an interesting history that they deserve special mention.

In 1849 the South Easton Post Office opened in the counting room of the Morse Company. When George Copeland became Postmaster in 1861, he transferred the Post Office to his store. An early photograph of this large building shows that it dated from the Federal Period shortly after the turn of the Nineteenth Century. It seems to show a building designed from the start to be a combination store and dwelling. Perhaps it had some association with the trade brought in by the turnpike. Horace Y. Mitchell took over the old Copeland store and the postmastership about 1888. In 1923 the general store and the post office moved diagonally across the street to the building still standing at 588 Washington Street. Into the 1970's this building retained some of the old general store flavor as Abbott's Pharmacy, but the post office moved to its current location in 1960. Today this old store and the 1848 school building behind it await demolition for yet another national fast food restaurant, and the post office too is soon to move.

Down the street at 619 Washington Street was Kenneth Mitchell's General Store which flourished in the 1930's and later. Besides the usual meats, groceries, ice cream, and cigars, the store also had two gas pumps. This building still stands today with a driving school and another Easton tradition, the Doll Shop, occupying the original storefront.

Gas stations and restaurants have also prospered along Washington Street. The first gas station in Easton, Boulette's was located on this road about half way between the

junction with Turnpike Street and Alger's Corners. The Condlin family also had an early gas station and later a restaurant across from the South Easton school. Much further south at the present site of the Blackthorne Tavern, (402 Turnpike Street) Warren Blood also operated a filling station.

Two restaurants at Morse's Corners deserve special mention. Dutchland Farms, located on the southeast corner of Routes 123 and 138, seems to have been similar in style to the old Howard Johnsons, featuring Grade A ice cream. Shortly afterward, it was taken over by Norma L. Buck who made it into a popular local dining spot. Later it became Topsy's Chicken House. The restaurant held band concerts and a weekly amateur fight night as promotions. On the west side of the same intersection was the Minnetonka Restaurant. In the late 1930's the Minnetonka was bought by Ted Darling, a local carpenter, who turned it into the Four Hundred Club Restaurant. The Four Hundred quickly became a popular local function center and remained so until it was sold to Shuen Gardens, a Chinese restaurant, just a few years ago. As of this time, the Shuen Gardens has closed and this site awaits another turn of history's page.

Today, Route 138 has more strip malls than any other part of town. We will document one of the first which was begun by Joseph Correia. Mr. Correia, a life-long resident, opened a package store in 1948. In 1965 he bought the northwest corner of Depot Street and Washington Street, and in the following year he moved his liquor store there. In the mid-1970's he turned the corner into a mini-mall that now is the home to such interesting Easton owned and operated businesses as Pat Walsh's Embroidery, Easton Seafood, and Paperback Junction.

Of course, the most successful long term commercial operation in South Easton has been the Simpson Spring Company. As mentioned earlier, Samuel D. Simpson acquired the property around Ridge Hill Spring after 1800. At that time and for many years afterward neighborhood people filled their buckets for free through an old hollow horn pine log which was wedged into the spring. On February 4, 1828 Simpson opened a blacksmith shop on the property and added in 1852 a wheelwright shop where Tanner Ford is now located. Simpson and his sons started a painting and trimming business in 1881 enhancing their ability to create complete carriages. This business continued in operation until after the turn of the Twentieth Century.

In 1878 Frederick A. Howard, the grandson-in-law of Samuel Simpson, realized that the ancient Ridge Hill Spring could be used to make money by delivering water to people's homes. He had the water tested by the state and then built a small wooden building over the spring. The new spring water company was called F. A. Howard and Company. The spring already had a strong local reputation as a never-failing source of cool water with water temperature ranging from 48 degrees in the winter to 55 degrees in summer. Early sales were heaviest in the rapidly growing city of Brockton.

Two years later the Company started to make carbonated beverages. At first the beverage factory was not at the spring, but at a small workshop near the South Easton Railroad Station over a thousand feet away. The new business was successful, and in 1884 it was incorporated as the Simpson Spring Company.

While other parts of the country call it soda and pop, many New Englanders still use the term tonic. The reason for this is that early carbonated beverages were sold for their medicinal properties rather than their flavor. Early bottlers often were involved in the patent medicine trade. In the 1890's Simpson Spring Company made over fifty-four

different products from lime juice to tincture of rhubarb and extract of checkerberry. The unripe limes were shipped from Jamaica in large casks and then ripened. Finally the juice was filtered through white sand before bottling.

A major reason for the company's success was Edwin H. White who joined the firm in 1886 and became the company's Superintendent in 1890 at age 20. White and F. L. Howard (no relation to F.A. Howard) took charge of the company in 1905 when the original Howard left to perfect his dustless duster invention. The company's fortunes continued to improve, and by 1910 it had eighty employees during the summer and sales of about one million dollars compared to sales of \$12,000 in 1886. By the 1920's over 150 worked during the summers. The current main building which includes a research laboratory and a stained glass windowed room housing the original spring dates from 1928.

Moxie, the ultimate New England tonic, accounted for large sales during this era, but the firm also developed its own beverages. A variety of ginger ale flavors like Pale Dry and Golden earned well deserved popularity. In 1935 at age sixty-five Edwin H. White developed a special coffee percolation process that led to the production of coffee soda. Until World War II large quantities of coffee soda were shipped weekly to Macy's Department store in New York. At a time when other Easton businesses were ravaged by the Great Depression, Simpson Spring Company actually added a large room to its 1928 factory just to accommodate the Macy trade.

Sugar rationing during World War II limited activity at the company, but it came back strongly after the war. In 1952 Leslie B. White succeeded his eighty-two year old father as company president. Edwin White continued to work at the spring until his death in 1959. His record of seventy-two years at the same company is unlikely to be surpassed by any other Eastoner.

The decades of the Fifties and Sixties brought many changes. Although a small company compared to industry giants like Coca-Cola and Pepsi, Simpson Spring had an active research program which produced many unusual flavors. In the 1950's Leslie B. White continued this tradition by developing the company's first artificially sweetened drink, a version of golden ginger ale. In 1967 Edwin C. White became President.

Other changes were not so good. In 1960 a strike occurred that shut down production for two weeks in the crucial month of July. In 1967 the company reluctantly adopted the use of non-returnable bottles in order to remain competitive in the industry. However, President Edwin White later became one of only a few bottlers to support passage of our current bottle return law.

On December 30, 1988 Simpson Spring was sold to James Bertarelli. While carbonated beverages are still sold with the Simpson Spring label, the spring water business has become even more successful. Outside faucets now allow current Eastonites to fill up at the Spring much as their ancestors have for three centuries.

At the turn of the century, people visiting Simpson Spring could stop and get their carriage repaired or even buy a new one at Simpson's carriage works. Today, many people visit this part of the neighborhood for similar reasons. Since 1972 Paul Tanner's Ford dealership has been located at 703 Washington Street. In the early 1950's Tanner opened his business in the garage at 4 Hayward Street in North Easton, now the home of Easton Auto Body. At that time the garage was owned by "Red" DeWitt, then the owner of the lumber company immediately to the east. The success of the popular Tanner led to

a need for a larger shop. Thus, he purchased and renovated the Manchester machine shop in South Easton. The Manchester shop had been erected on the site of a building destroyed in 1947 by the only tornado recorded to have touched down in Easton.

While the men developed their businesses, the women were not idle. Reflecting a trend towards an increased role outside the home, women of this neighborhood and Easton Center founded a literary club known as "The Badge" in 1895. After two name changes it became the Browning Club. The organization joined the State Federation of Women's Club's in 1915 and the General Federation in 1927. During its first half century the club met in members' homes. In 1945 meetings were moved to Frothingham Memorial Hall and later to Oakes Ames Memorial Hall. Miss Harriet Stone who joined the Browning Club in 1896 remained a member for over seventy years until her death in 1967! Today the club is in its centennial year. For many years it has sponsored a scholarship for Oliver Ames High School graduates.

Despite the numerous commercial enterprises along Washington Street over the decades, the western part of the neighborhood was the home of numerous farms. One whose remains can still be seen today is the Old Howard Farm located around the junction of Purchase and Church Streets. This property is today owned by Mr. Bertarelli, the owner of Simpson Spring, and is one of the largest parcels of undeveloped open space remaining under private ownership in Easton. In the Nineteenth Century this was the home of Lucius Howard. Howard was the son of Oliver Howard who built the house still standing at 31 Short Street. Lucius Howard built his own home on Purchase Street in 1828. This site was farmed by Howard and by his son Lucius, Jr. who died in 1907

William N. Howard, the son of Lucius, Jr., was one of the most prominent Eastoners of his time. Born in 1871, he stayed on the family farm until about 1896 when he moved to North Easton. By this time he had already acquired the insurance agency which still bears his name today, but he was most interested in his new 250 acre farm in North Easton and in the general success of dairying throughout the state. He helped organize Producer's Dairy Cooperative and was its president for 20 years. He also organized the Cooperative Dairy Council of Massachusetts and served as its first president. Howard, a member of Easton Grange #196, P. of H., held office in the State Grange for forty years including 28 years as State Secretary and four years as State Master. Howard served our town as State Representative for a term and as Chairman of the Finance Committee. Howard died in 1938.

Near the Lucius Howard Farm was the farm of Wilmarth P. Howard. He had purchased the Rotheus Reed Farm near the junction of Purchase and Prospect Streets. As well as a dairy business, Wilmarth Howard developed an orchard of around 1000 trees. Most of the trees were Macintosh, but Howard did raise other varieties as well. His apples won several ribbons and a silver cup in competitions at the Brockton Fair and were shipped to the southern states and Europe. Like his neighbor, Wilmarth Howard was an active leader in farm organizations such as the Farm Bureau and the Grange. He died in 1923.

Dairies and orchards are examples of the more specialized products that kept agriculture alive in Easton in the years after the Civil War. South Easton hosted two more special farms that were even more unusual. One was the Curry Mink Farm that existed for many years on Purchase Street while the other was Rankin's Maplewood Farm now the Easton Country Club.

Many spots in Easton bear the name Maplewood, but few today know the name is a tribute to James Rankin. An obituary called Rankin “the father of the Pekin duck business,” but he might just as well have been called one of the founding fathers of the modern poultry industry. Born in Glasgow, Scotland in 1830, his father moved the family to a farm in Rochester, Massachusetts when Rankin was a small boy. One of his earliest responsibilities was the family’s flock of ten or twelve ducks. In the spring young Rankin drove these ducks and their ducklings to a nearby pond. Despite his best efforts, more than half the ducklings died each year through this natural duck raising method. This experience gave him a lifelong commitment to scientific poultry raising.

In due course, James Rankin became the foreman of a farm at Woods Hole. He had a scientific turn of mind and conducted experiments in many aspects of agriculture. In 1868 he purchased an egg incubator with the goal of testing it versus brooding hens then the main method of raising baby chicks. Incubators had been tried in England for a century and in America for about thirty years. There was only one problem; no incubator worked as well as real chickens!

The lack of mass production in the poultry business kept prices high. Most farmers let their hens hatch out a nest or two of eggs in the spring, and then sold the tender spring chickens in May or June. During the remainder of the year, retired layers and other tough veterans found their way to market. Rankin simply hoped his new incubator would let him hatch more eggs for the Spring market, but his early experiments were disastrous. Two hundred dozen eggs yielded only two hundred “sorry looking chickens.” Undaunted, Rankin soon began to tinker with his store bought machines.

Success finally came in Easton. In 1874, he purchased the Deacon Abijah Reed Farm. He wrote

I found it very much run down, keeping with difficulty three or four cows and a horse. The buildings, both house and barn, were in bad condition. I repaired the house, [now 261 Purchase Street] built a new barn and started confidently to work. I had bought the place for its possibilities...

The forty-four year old Rankin and his family would turn the old farm which he called Maple Farm or Maplewood into a show place. Even as his reputation as a poultry and duck man grew, Rankin took pride in running a general farm with cows, vegetable gardens, and orchards. Still, it was Rankin’s perfection of the incubator in the fall of 1878 that made his fortune. By then a decade of experiments had produced a machine with the proper blend of heat, ventilation, and humidity to hatch over 90% of the eggs placed in it. His Monarch incubator was patented in 1884 and was probably the first truly successful incubator in the country. By 1885 sixteen men worked full time for Rankin producing incubators for sale in a building on Purchase Street north of the farm.

On the Easton farm the new incubator immediately caused a problem. So many baby chicks hatched that the brooding hens could not keep them all warm. To prevent excessive mortality Rankin developed a brooder house like a large hot bed heated by steam boilers at each end. Thus, Rankin had achieved all that was necessary to mass produce chickens year round. Under the Rankin system, after laying the eggs, the hen became superfluous.

In his decade of experiment, Rankin tried his incubators on duck eggs with increasing success, but he did not use the incubator to revolutionize the duck business. At that time it was typical farm practice to follow up spring chickens with a crop of ducks that went to

market in July or August. Raised on local ponds or by the sea on Long Island where they fed on fish, these ducks tasted exceedingly gamy and were not popular. Rankin, who had tried a variety of duck breeds, bought some Imperial Peking ducks (the white ones common today) and tried another experiment. He believed that by raising ducks in pens on dry land with strictly controlled feed, he could produce a duck that would be as tasty as chickens. He was right again, but he had to take his first land raised ducks to Boston and give them away to create a market. In 1882, the Easton farm sold only 1200 ducks. By 1897 Maplewood Farms produced 12,000 ducks for market and many more for live sale. The modern duck business was underway, and Rankin popularized and promoted it through his immensely popular guides to duck raising.

Julia Rankin Belcher, one of the James Rankin's daughters, achieved a local celebrity. She was a noted musician and composer of popular music in the early part of the Twentieth Century and received several honors for her talents. She married Edgar Belcher, and in 1895 they built the charming home still standing at 271 Purchase Street.

On January 1, 1908 the seventy-eight year old James Rankin sold his farm. He died in 1914 at his home at South Easton Green. Despite the passing of Easton's greatest agricultural innovator, his farm continued. In 1914 Frederick Lothrop Ames (1876-1921) bought it as a home for his championship Clydesdales. Fairholme Footprint, foaled in 1912 and purchased by Mr. Ames for \$5,000, was the champion at the International Livestock Exposition in 1916, 1918, and 1919. He stood at stud at the farm until Mr. Ames' untimely death. This great Clydesdale was descended from the leading sires of Scotland and sired several champions. When Mr. Ames died, his widow sold the farm and donated Fairholme Footprint to Iowa State University.

After passing through several hands, Samuel and Mary Lombardi purchased the farm in 1945. Mr. Lombardi ran the property as a dairy farm until 1961. At that time the Lombardi family called in Samuel Mitchell to design a nine hole golf course that would become the Easton Country Club. In February 1962, the old farm buildings were destroyed by a fire, but the new golf course opened on schedule in the Spring of the same year. An additional nine holes opened in 1968. Thus, the property that James Rankin called "a fine plot of loamy land" is still preserved as open space for Eastoners to enjoy.

Over the years other recreational facilities have had their home in the neighborhood. Two are of particular note: the Villa Rosa, and Ames Field. Established in the open space north of the 400 Club, the Villa Rosa was the home of innumerable fairs and festivals including many Portuguese ones until the 1980's. Today, rising land values have made the Villa Rosa field a prime target for development.

Ames Field grew out of the love of Frederick Lothrop Ames (1876-1921) for flying. Ames, a son of Frederick Lothrop Ames (1835-1893), built his mansion "Stone Hill House" in 1904. Designed by Parker, Thomas and Rice, it was named for an old stone house which once stood on the hill. When Mr. Ames first used his estate for an airfield is unknown, but it is traditionally held that it began after the airstrip on Bay Road which opened in 1910. Initially just a mowed strip in a flat field near the junction of Belmont Street and Route 138 where the Langwater Guernseys once grazed, the field eventually expanded to have two runways and a hangar. The entrance to the field was across from the Clock Farm. Mr. Ames' son, Frederick (1905-1932) was killed on November 6, 1932 when his plane crashed into Tower Hill in Randolph en route from East Boston to Easton. An accomplished flyer, Mr. Ames was performing stunts when a box of supplies shifted

in the plane and jammed the control stick.

In 1923 a barnstorming act performing at the Brockton Fair used the field and in 1924 it hosted a squadron of Army Air Force planes which were visiting the Fair. The famous Jimmy Doolittle was one of the pilots in the 1924 show. A landing accident and other near accidents plus complaints that thousands of people went to Ames Field rather than to the Fair led our Congressman Louis Frothingham to support legislation prohibiting military aircraft from participating in civilian activities.

From 1925 to 1932 the field was private and used as a base for Mr. Ames' East Coast Aircraft Company. After Mr. Ames' death until World War II, George Malouin managed the field and ran a flying school which gave many Eastoners of that generation an opportunity to fly. On May 19, 1938 the field was used for Easton's only airmail delivery in celebration of National Airmail Week. During the war the field was used as an auxiliary training facility for planes based in Mansfield. In 1944 the flying school resumed under the management of Charles DelSordo with the name Ames School Country Club of the Air. Since he was training pilots for the service, Mr. DelSordo was able to use money from the G.I. Bill to rent the field from the priests at the seminary. Passengers could charter flights from the field. Rocky Marciano used this charter service to fly to New York for fights, and the Holy Cross Fathers used it to go to Martha's Vineyard to conduct mass. Tightening FAA regulations, the expansion of Stonehill and the loss of funds from the G.I. Bill led to the closing of the field in 1955. This was good news for people along Belmont Street who had been unable to have telephones because the poles and wires interfered with Ames Field's landing pattern.

After the tragic death of Fred Ames, Stonehill was put up for sale in the late summer of 1935. The estate was bought by the Holy Cross Fathers for use as its eastern training quarters for young men who wished to become missionaries. After World War II the Holy Cross Fathers and Brothers dreamed of establishing a college on the site. This college, named Stonehill after the Ames mansion "Stone Hill House," opened on September 20, 1948 with 127 students in two buildings. In 1952 the missionary trainees moved to North Dartmouth, but the seminarians remained in Easton. They were housed in the converted cow barn that had once held the famous Langwater Guernseys. The old cow barn became a Retreat House in 1959 when Moreau Hall opened for the seminarians. In 1981 the College sold Moreau Hall to the town which has used it as an elementary school.

Since its inception Stonehill has continued to grow in both physical size and in reputation. It has developed a national reputation for Irish Studies and for the Congressman Joseph Martin Papers and the Arnold Tofias collection of Ames Shovel Company material. In 1994 it hosted the town's 300th Anniversary Gala. Today, this institution, touching on Unionville, North Easton, and South Easton, transcends its neighborhood as a major force in the community.

Stonehill is home to two of Easton's ghost stories. One has the benefit of age while the other is quite new. The older story begins with a drowning that allegedly occurred in the indoor pool located in a building near the mansion when it was still owned by the Ames family. When Stonehill College was created, they covered the pool and used the building as a gym. The draining of the pool hasn't stopped members of two generations of Stonehill students from reporting children's voices and a gruesome scratching sound coming from under the floor in the building, now Alumni Hall. A good story no doubt,

but there was almost certainly no drowning in the old pool!

The other ghost story was coined more recently. It tells of a dread Blue Mist that sweeps across campus. Inside the Mist is the blood stained ghost of Fred Ames come to walk his estate again. This ghost story grew during one of the frequent expansions of Stonehill when new high powered outside lighting was installed in the late 1970's or early 1980's. These lights do seem to turn some of the frequent fogs that sweep through Easton an unusual shade of blue!

While the neighborhood has had a plethora of farms and businesses in its long history, churches have generally been in other parts of town. In March, 1962 after two years of planning, the members of the Church of Christ dedicated their building at the junction of Central and Depot Streets, sometimes called Morris Corner. In 1960 with the help of the Hillcrest Church of Christ from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, the members of this group had purchased and renovated a home on Lothrop Street in North Easton to serve as a parsonage with a meeting room in the basement. Meetings were held there for about four months. In the fall when the South Easton Post Office moved to its present site, the new church group moved into the old Post Office building. Finally, the peripatetic church settled in the location it still occupies today. However, in 1995 the membership is considering selling the church to another religious group.

In 1965 the Catholic Bishop of Fall River Diocese invited the Holy Cross Fathers of Stonehill to establish a new parish for South Easton, Eastondale, Easton Center, and Furnace Village to end overcrowding at the Immaculate Conception Church in North Easton. Until their new church, a beautiful colonial style building, was completed on Purchase Street in June, 1967, the parish worshiped at the Easton Seminary of the Holy Cross Fathers at Stonehill.

The pattern of land use in the neighborhood today would be recognizable to people like Caleb Swan or E. J. W. Morse. The region along Route 138 is still the neighborhood's commercial heart, but its growth has made it a shopping zone for all townspeople. Away from the highway, the farms may be gone, but the open spaces and quiet residential streets are a fitting replacement. No neighborhood seems so divided between the frenetic pace of modern times and the homey virtues of the past, but somehow it seems to work very well.