

Bay Road

We know nothing of individual Native Americans who lived in Easton. Even their villages have become invisible save for the stone tools and fireplaces buried underground. Yet today two parts of our Native American heritage are still an integral part of daily life in Easton. One is Simpson Spring that has supplied pure water to Indians and Europeans alike, and the other is Bay Road. That 36 mile long path from Taunton to Boston was already immemorially old when the first European settlers arrived. According to tradition some parts of the road in Easton were depressed a foot below the surrounding earth from the wear of native footfalls. Perhaps these Native Americans, as was their tradition, left piles of sticks and stones along the road to mark places that were strong "medicine." Certainly we'll see that this, the oldest of Easton's roads, has a haunted past.

In 1637 Elizabeth and William Pole, John Gilbert, Henry Andrews, Constable Strong, John and Walter Deane, Richard Williams, and a hundred others travelled down Bay Road to start the city of Taunton. Some of their descendants would one day return to Easton to help populate what was then a wilderness.

Befitting such an ancient way, the road had many different titles. As early as 1697 it was known as the "Road to Taunton," "The Road to Rhode Island," or "The Bay Road." It was "the common road where it passes Blue Hill" in 1704, the "Road leading to Rehoboth" in 1707, then the "King's Highway," the "Post Road," and "The Great Road from Boston to Taunton" in 1743. In 1725, the first minister in Canton received land from the Indians, one boundary of which was "The Taunton Old Way." Today, the Old Bay Road still has a variety of names. In Taunton it is Bay Street, in Norton, Easton, Stoughton, and Sharon it is Bay Road, and in 1840 Canton changed its name to Washington Street in honor of the first President. In Milton it is Canton Avenue and Green Street.

Whatever it is called, the Bay Road has a history that sets it apart from other local roads. As white people travelled the road, it gradually widened from a footpath until it was broad enough to accommodate a horse and wagon. By 1750 the colonists considered it an "important highway." It had become so important that in March of 1754, based on a survey by colonial Postmaster Benjamin Franklin, it was widened to forty feet within the town of Easton. By comparison, the road today is less than thirty feet wide. The widening led to increased traffic, and the mail coaches, stagecoaches, and heavy freight teams soon caused the road to deteriorate.

In January of 1771 the road was in such a state of disrepair that the Superior Court fined the Town of Easton ten pounds "by reason of the badness of their roads." Thus aroused, the Town raised money to repair the road. In 1772 the Town straightened and repaired it and added milestones along it; but by 1797 the Court again admonished Easton for the road's poor condition. The Town surveyed from the Stoughton line to Five Corners (junction of Bay Road, Routes 106 and 123) and chose a committee to repair the road, but they expended only \$126. So, in 1803 the Court cited Easton again. This time the Town spent \$300 that kept the road in fair condition until 1812 when the same trouble occurred. In 1813 the Court imposed a heavy fine for not correcting the poor conditions. Clearly, with the privately operated Turnpike in the eastern part of town paralleling the route of the Old Bay Road, the Town considered it a burden to keep up a road that was traveled so much by non-residents.

Repairing the road involved several methods, and one can still see evidence to point out these early repairs. One of the most common methods of repair was to dig gravel from the surrounding area and haul it by ox-drawn dump cart to the poor section of the road. This was fine for normally dry sections, but the wet areas needed other techniques. There the standard approach was to throw in crushed limestone but that was rare here. A suitable alternative was charcoal that was created in place from burning wood covered with straw and dirt. When the fire died down, the road workers removed the earth and spread the charcoal about two feet thick at the center of the road and a foot deep at the edge. A road of this type built twenty feet wide cost about \$500 a mile in the mid-1800's, but it is unlikely the town used this method for anything more than short stretches of repair work.

In 1800 a stage line began along Bay Road. It ran from Boston to New Bedford through Taunton. The stage coach would leave Major King's Tavern in Boston at 3 A. M. (certainly an early departure!) on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays and would pass through Sharon and Easton, changing horses in Taunton. Although travel in the early days was slow, the Bay Road was one of the quickest routes of its time.

Both before and after its heyday, the Bay Road area was a separate neighborhood. North Eastoners generally regarded it as the western terminus of civilization calling anyone from the western half of town Bay Roaders. The neighborhood itself consists of a northern and southern spoke joined by the hub of the Five Corners (junction of Routes 123, 106, and Bay Road). Chaffin in his 1886 history considered the Five Corners as part of Furnace Village, but it was north-south traffic along Bay Road that caused this area to develop, so it is included with the Bay Road neighborhood here. In 1754, when the road was widened to forty feet, there were probably about ten houses on the entire road in Easton. As trade increased, so did the number of homes and taverns.

The first known settler on Bay Road was Daniel Owen, Sr. who moved here from Taunton between 1705 and 1710 when the road was still little more than a cart path. His house was about 30 rods north of the head of Summer Street. Owen seems to have been attracted to the area by decent farmland. Timber also seems to have been plentiful there; the area northeast of his property was known in early times as the Chestnut Orchard.

Nothing remains of Owen's homestead, but the oldest house still standing in Easton is on the Bay Road south of the Five Corners at 479 Bay Road. Josiah Keith, son of Reverend James Keith of West Bridgewater, came to Easton and built a barn on the Bay Path in 1715. The date was found cut in one of the sills of the barn after it was struck by lightning and burned in 1902. It stood a short distance north of where his house would be. Mr. Keith probably drove his cattle back and forth between here and West Bridgewater in the spring and autumn until he built his house here two years later. At times he lived in his barn. Keith's father's house still stands in West Bridgewater, and the land around it is still a dairy farm.

Josiah Keith apparently did not buy land in Easton until 1717 when he bought 108 acres from Nathaniel Ames of Bridgewater. He "pitched" for the land his barn stood on with the North Purchase proprietors that means he laid out the boundary. It was duly recorded that he pitched from a heap of stones and from a maple tree with a bird's nest with one egg. Heman Howard dryly noted in the 1930's that, "the heap of stones can still be seen, but the bird's nest with one egg has probably disappeared." Mr. Howard also noted that Keith started to build his house on July 7, 1717.

A few years after Keith built his house he added a sawmill a short distance to the west on Mulberry Meadow Brook later called Leach's Stream. We do not know how long this mill was used, but it had disappeared by 1771. There were several difficulties. At first there was not enough water to run the mill, and it was several times sold. At one time Samuel Keith and Benjamin Williams jointly owned it; the Williams and Keith families were related by marriage. They had a disagreement about running the mill, so it was agreed between them that one should run it in the morning and the other in the afternoon!

Sometime later Lewis Williams (1775-1860) and his father Thomas, then 88 years old, made a new dam, excavated a new 15 acre mill pond, and built a canal to furnish power, all with hand tools and an ox-drawn dump cart. They erected their new mill just south of the old location, on the west side of Bay Road. The pond was on the east side of the road. Heman Howard reported that this was said to be the first mill in town to have a saw driven by waterpower entirely without the aid of manpower. It certainly became, at this time or later, the first belt driven sawmill in the vicinity replacing the older system of gears and cogged wheels. The Historical Society preserves some of the wheels over which the belts ran. According to tradition many years after this mill was built, the owners installed an engine to replace the waterpower. The contraption ran one day, quit, and the very next day the new-fangled device was replaced by the old reliable overshot waterwheel that ran the mill until it closed in the Twentieth Century.

The first Josiah Keith became a licensed innkeeper, and his house was an inn as early as 1724 even before the road was developed for coach travel. In February 1754 Josiah Keith died, and thereafter there is no mention of the house being used as an inn. However, a milestone marker discovered in the bridge over Bay Road just south of the oldest house had the letters I E carved in it. Because the milestones were done in the 1770's and set up at the taverns of persons whose initials were engraved on them, the old Keith house may have continued as a tavern. Whoever I E was is still a mystery. COULD THIS BE A MISREADING OF IK FOR JOSIAH KEITH, II?

John Adams noted ruefully that tavern keeping was the mother of many a colonial politician, and Easton's tavern keepers were no exception. Josiah Keith was Town Moderator for seven years and Town Treasurer for two years. Despite his prominence Keith was not without competitors in the tavern trade. Due to the lack of waterpower except near the Keith house, farms, taverns, and blacksmith shops were the only way to make money along the old Bay Road. Thus, Keith's monopoly on the tavern trade ended quickly.

Keith's earliest competitor was Captain Benjamin Williams who came to Easton about 1725 just before the town was incorporated. By 1727 he had built a house, probably the second oldest still standing in town, at 539 Bay Road. It quickly joined the Keith house as an operating tavern. Benjamin Williams kept this inn until 1730 when he sold it to his brother John who carried on the establishment until he died in 1756. It undoubtedly continued to serve as an inn long after that because a milestone in the front yard dated 1773 carries Benjamin Williams' initials (probably Benjamin, Jr.). "Believe it or not," George Washington was said to have slept here while negotiating for cannon at the Furnace Village Iron Works. At the turn of the Nineteenth Century, Daniel Wheaton lived in the tavern while his house was being built on the next lot to the north. After Wheaton became postmaster, mail was dropped off at the Williams tavern once a week for the post office.

Like Josiah Keith, Benjamin Williams became a town leader. As captain of the militia he fought in the French and Indian War. Although over sixty years old, he raised a company to join in an expedition against Crown Point in 1756. He also served as Town Treasurer for two years and Selectman for one year.

Other taverns sprang up along both the north and south parts of the road. Joseph Gilbert was another tavern-keeping politician who started his business about 1749. His inn was about two hundred yards south of the Sharon line on the west side of the road. The milestone for this tavern is now near the corner of Mountain Road. Gilbert was on the Committee of Correspondence during the Revolution, was Town Treasurer once and Selectman once and served on the first Prudential (School) Committee in Easton. This tavern closed about 1802.

The most successful politician and businessman to own a tavern on Bay Road was Matthew Hayward. The son of early settler Edward Hayward, Matthew was Town Clerk for twenty-seven years, Selectman for six years and State Representative for three years. He was active in many early businesses such as the first iron furnace in Furnace Village. His tavern built perhaps as early as 1753 and located at 448 Bay Road, still stands today with its mileage marker across the road from it.

Beginning in the 1760's, Josiah Keith, the third of that name in town, had a tavern about where the current Mobil gas station (491 Foundry Street) is on the northwest corner of Bay Road at the Five Corners. As we shall see, this site has continuously served the needs of travelers and neighborhood people alike for over 200 years.

The third Josiah Keith turned to war rather than politics as an outlet for his leadership ability. On the 19th of April 1775, Keith was a lieutenant in Captain Macey Record's West Company of Minutemen and Militia. News of Lexington and Concord reached Easton just after noon. WE HAVE A DESCRIPTION OF THIS! Keith and his company quickly organized and made a night march up the Bay Road to Boston. Tradition says that more than a thousand men "paraded" Bay Road from Taunton to Boston that night. One can imagine that the Keith Tavern was the organizing point for our minutemen due to its central location at the Five Corners and the availability of ardent spirits. Records from later in the war indicate that while Easton militiamen may not have all had bayonets or hatchets as required by law, each had a canteen. Every soldier got a daily ration of rum provided by the state!

During the war Keith rose to lead the West Company of Militia as Captain. This unit was active in several campaigns in Rhode Island. Keith's wartime service did not translate into peacetime political success, and as the years went by his fortunes seem to have declined. He committed suicide April 9, 1803. His grave is in the Lt. John Williams cemetery on Prospect Street just east of Bay Road. To mark for posterity the disgrace of his suicide, Keith was buried at a right angle to everyone else in the graveyard.

The milestone marker for Keith's tavern provides us with a Bay Road mystery. Keith's initials have been scratched out, and the stone rests not at the Five Corners where his tavern was but a half-mile to the south at 345 Bay Road. The marker is also unusual because it includes half miles in its distances to Boston and Taunton. This mysterious old stone was one of the first things in Easton to pique the historical interest of the author when I moved to the house at 345 Bay Road in the early 1960's, but I am no closer to solving its challenge than I was thirty years ago!

Three other early taverns on the Bay Road deserve mention. Samuel Coney

apparently ran one. The location of this tavern has been something of a mystery. Inside the foundation of the house at 241 Bay Road (across from Summer Street) is a milestone marker with the initials SC, but the mileage is not visible. Thus, we can only speculate about the location of this tavern, but historical researcher Duncan Oliver has concluded it was probably farther north than the current resting place of the marker. In 1770 Coney also owned a very small sawmill on Rockland Street about half a mile from Bay Road (near 43 Rockland Street). Sometime after serving a single term as a Selectman in 1771 Coney moved to Maine. The little sawmill passed into the hands of James Perry sometime between 1779 and 1785.

The Josiah Kingman Tavern was located opposite Rockland Street on the east side of Bay Road. Kingman apparently operated his inn from the 1770's to about 1800. Perhaps Kingman succeeded Samuel Coney as innkeeper that would solve the mystery of the Coney tavern location. Kingman's place was certainly close to Coney's sawmill, and the timing is right, but further research is needed to clinch the identification. Chaffin states that George Washington slept here on his way to Boston and gives a dates in his Randall genealogy. There he calls it Mrs. Kingman's tavern so check death dates, etc.

The final tavern keeper politician of Eighteenth Century Easton was Ebenezer Tisdale. Tisdale was a native of Sharon and had a distinguished career there in the early part of the Revolution. He moved to Easton in 1778 and opened a tavern located on the west side of Bay Road opposite Randall Street slightly to the south. Certainly one of the more remarkable characters on the Bay Road at this time was Tisdale's wife who was said to be so strong she could pick up a barrel of rum by the bunghole. Tisdale served his adopted home in politics only once; he was our delegate to the convention that ratified the American Constitution. He voted against ratification either on instruction from town meeting or because he agreed with the Sharon delegate who opposed the Constitution as a union with slaveholders. See Randall Genealogy for potential info on Benjamin Randall and your own early research.

Tisdale sold his tavern about 1790 to Nathaniel Wetherby. On July 1, 1800, Wetherby became the first U. S. Postmaster for Easton, Norton, and Mansfield, but he lost the job six months later to Daniel Wheaton.

While other taverns seemed to fade away about 1800, the Tisdale place continued and helped bring an unsavory reputation to its part of Bay Road. During the War of 1812 old Captain Samuel Hodge kept the tavern. In 1813 his son raised a company of recruits for the war, but, according to Chaffin, the soldiers "drank more of the old Captain's rum than they paid for," and terrorized the neighborhood and even North Easton. The one lasting example of this reign of terror was the destruction of many gravestones in the Bay Road Cemetery.

This cemetery began before 1772 when the North Purchase Proprietors formally established it. It also holds the unmarked graves of the mistreated poor who died in Alby Willis' private poorhouse on Randall Street. In those days the town auctioned the poor to the lowest bidder. After six inmates of Willis' almshouse died in 1821, town meeting voted not to accept his bids no matter how low they were. Ironically, Alby Willis ended his days at the Easton Poor Farm in Easton Center.

The Tisdale Tavern finally became part of one of Easton's many ghost stories. By this time it was called the Sheperd (or Shepard) Place for "Marm" Shepard perhaps the last person to run it as an inn. Willis Buck discovered the story in the August 1900 *Ladies*

Home Journal:

What was known as the Shepard House on the Old Bay Road, near Easton, was for many years reputed to be haunted by the ghost of a former occupant of the house who had hanged himself. Strange stories are told of the annoyances experienced by various tenants at all hours of the night, but they were never favored with a sight of the intruder. In one of the chambers was an old-fashioned corded bedstead, and on several occasions its occupant was awakened suddenly by finding himself on the floor, the cords which sustained the bed having been removed by unseen hands without breaking or cutting. Many times the whole family were alarmed by what sounded like a wagon load of stones falling from a great height onto the roof, threatening to crush it. These disturbances became so frequent that it was with difficulty that tenants could be found for the house, so much dread did people have of the ghostly intruders.

No one has discovered who the suicide was. While the house still stands today, no one known to this writer has positively identified it. It may be the one at 105 Bay Road. Ironically, Bay Road's other haunted house belonged to Daniel Wheaton, the person who won the postmastership away from Captain Wetherby.

Tavern keepers had to keep up a certain appearance of prosperity, so it is not surprising to find that at least three of the old taverns are associated with Eighteenth Century New England's tragic status symbol: human slavery. Benjamin Williams owned a slave named "London," or "Lunan." Reverend Mr. Campbell baptized him into the Town Church in 1773. This was a clear indication of the ambivalence with which New Englanders viewed slavery at the time. Two years later his master died at the age of 80, and "London" himself followed his master the next year, 1776. By that time Anthony Hayward, the slave of Matthew Hayward, had won his freedom by joining the militia unit that marched north on Bay Road on April 19, 1775.

The last slave in Easton lived in our oldest house. James Dean, who lived in the house, had bought a slave girl for thirty pounds when she was eleven years old. Her name was Catherine Miller, and she lived with the Dean family for about thirty-five years or until his death in 1803. In Dean's will she received a bed and bedding and sheep worth five dollars. Dean's heirs added two chests and two dollars in cash. In endorsing the settlement, she called herself Cate Dean and made her mark. She died at 49 in 1809 at the home of Edward Johnson and is buried in the Williams Cemetery on Prospect Street. The decision to remain with the Dean family was her own because slavery was abolished in Massachusetts more than twenty years before Mr. Dean's death.

The start of the Nineteenth Century marked the beginning of the age of toll roads, canals and railroads. With these new ideas Bay Road slowly changed from a dirt superhighway to a mere country road. That change is clear when one finds that the number one citizen of the neighborhood in the early 1800's was not a tavern keeper but a lawyer and gentleman farmer, Daniel Wheaton.

Daniel Wheaton, the brother of the founder of Wheaton College and the son of Dr. George Wheaton of Norton, came to Easton in April 1796, five years after his graduation from Harvard. In those intervening five years Wheaton had become a lawyer, the career he would practice in Easton until his death on September 1, 1841. The dearth of legal talent here and the fact that his wife's family, the Goodwins, lived on Bay Road near Summer Street probably attracted him to Easton. By the time of his death, he had accumulated 365 acres from the Williams family between the Williams tavern and the old Keith house. The home that he completed at 539 Bay Road in 1797 or 1798 stands today

as the most elegant example of Federal Style architecture in Easton. Taking the plans from the Belcher House in Easton Furnace, Wheaton made the overall dimensions slightly larger and added more elegant interior trim. Because Wheaton was actively engaged in government, law, and religious matters (which were still inextricably mixed in those days), his home functioned almost as a public building during his life.

Wheaton was an ardent Federalist as were most of the other prominent men of Easton at the time. He was one of President Adams' famous "midnight appointments" gaining a postmastership from the lame duck President on January 27, 1801. Ironically, Wheaton would hold that postmastership until a few months before his death almost thirty years after the Federalist Party itself died. At first, post riders or stages dropped the mail at the old Benjamin Williams Tavern. Later, Wheaton erected a small cottage on the property for the mail. In 1815 the post office moved to the mansion. Finally, in 1828 the post office shifted to the office of Wheaton's son-in-law Dr. Samuel Deans on Bay Road near Highland Street although Wheaton retained the postmastership. For many years Wheaton delivered the mail by bringing it to church at Easton Center.

In 1812, with signs that the Federalists were weakening everywhere but in New England, Wheaton became one of the founding members of the Washington Benevolent Society and Library, a club for the town's Federalist leaders. The club included Isaac Kimball, the other leading citizen of Bay Road of whom we will hear more shortly. Although politically active all his life, Wheaton seldom held political office. He did serve with his son-in-law Dr. Deans on the School Committee from 1827 to 1832. During that time he donated a school on his property for neighborhood students. Before that time the district had no building, and school was held sporadically in private homes.

Despite being politically conservative, Wheaton was theologically liberal. He devoted much of the last decade of his life to church affairs and was one of the leaders of the faction that eventually founded the Unitarian Church at Easton Center.

Wheaton's son, Daniel B. Wheaton, remained in the family home until after the turn of the Twentieth Century and continued some of his father's interest in town politics. Then again, perhaps the family still hasn't left despite a succession of new owners. At least, it is claimed, a lady in white Nineteenth Century clothes has made several appearances in our century. A passing motorist on a foggy night during the occupancy of the Dray family watched her leave the barn, pass across the road with a lantern in her hand and disappear into the carriage house. Earlier, when the Boesenkool family lived in the house, the lady in white occasionally appeared in the upstairs front windows. On one occasion, a Boesenkool daughter, alone in the house, heard distinctly someone whistling "Yankee Doodle."

Even for those who do not believe in ghosts Wheaton farm has retained its prominence in town affairs throughout this century. Around 1910 a private airstrip was built behind the house. Why it was built is unknown, but speculation has focused on a pair of airshows held in New York and Boston in 1910. Planes flying from New York might have found Easton a convenient or even a necessary stopping off point. At any rate, tradition says that the first plane to land in Easton stopped at this dirt strip whose only instrument was a windsock. It is an interesting coincidence that the site of the earliest foot travel in Easton also was the launching point for a new era of transportation. During World War II training planes from Mansfield Airport practiced touchdowns and takeoffs at this airstrip until a plane crashed into a power line in 1944. Older residents of Bay

Road clearly remember the plane being carried back to Mansfield on a flat bed truck.

Today Wheaton Farm stands as a monument to our Town's strong commitment to education and conservation. In the mid-1960's Mr. Boesenkool, who had run a dairy farm on the site since 1945, was tricked into selling his land to developers who posed as a family willing to keep the old property together. In the autumn of 1965 Clifford "Kippy" Grant, a resident of Bay Road, challenged his fellow Conservation Committee members to save the historic farm "because of the beauty of the land, the abundant wildlife, and its unspoiled natural and historic value." Under difficult time restrictions Virginia Reusch and Lyn White spearheaded a successful town wide fundraising effort that saved the farm. Robert Dray bought the old mansion and two acres of land with the rest of the old farm retained by the Town for conservation and educational uses. At present, Wheaton Farm is a 718-acre parcel of open space preserving the old time character of Bay Road, and providing water for Easton's newest pumping station. In the early 1990's the Ratcliffe family lovingly restored the home to its earlier splendor. Thus, this section of Bay Road is much as it was in the early 1800's. Bay Road south of Five Corners to the Norton line has been a National Register Historical District since 1972.

Kippy Grant's own home at 456 Bay Road shares in the haunted tradition of Bay Road despite being built just a century ago. Eleanor Grant calls the following "a passing over story" rather than a ghost story. Ms. Grant writes:

On the evening of November 12, 1932, my great grandmother, Ellen Gardner lay dying... My father "Kip" Grant, who was only 12 years old at the time, was sitting in a chair in the corner of what is now our living room. As the moment of death came to Ellen Gardner that evening, my father watched in amazement as her favorite rocking chair began to rock back and forth for several minutes. There were no doors or windows open that evening so the rocking motion could not possibly have been caused by a draft.

THAT CHAIR MOVED BY ITS OWN POWER!

My father never disclosed this to anyone but my mother. I only learned of it from her shortly after his death in 1987. My father always said that there were forces and energies at work in this world that nobody could define or understand.

Everyone acquainted with my father knew that his word was solid as an oak.

Moving back toward the Five Corners, we know less of another successful Nineteenth Century Bay Road family, the Kimballs, but they certainly played a large role in the neighborhood and the town in their time. The founder of this family was Ammi Kimball, who came to Easton as a youth and worked as a laborer. The family's prominence in Easton began with Ammi's son Isaac.

Isaac Kimball was born in Easton September 18, 1770. He began his working life as a carpenter, and when he married in 1797, he built his own home on the east side of Bay Road at the head of Highland Street. Kimball kept an inn and store in his home and prospered as a trader. (The home at 416 Bay Road probably is not Kimball's store, but it dates from the same time.) Beginning perhaps as early as 1800, the inn was a stage station where "the aristocratic and pretentious coaches changed horses." Kimball's and Wetherby's, north of the Five Corners, were almost certainly the last two inns to operate on the Bay Road in Easton. In 1810 Isaac's only son John was born in the old homestead. At some point the family moved into the beautiful Greek Revival home still standing today on the south corner of Highland Street and Bay Road at 423 Bay Road, but they kept the business in the original house.

Young John Kimball got a common school education and became his father's clerk in

1820. John succeeded his father in the business in 1834 and prospered. Isaac Kimball lived until 1848, an unusually long retirement for those days. John Kimball himself retired from merchandising in 1855 when he sold out to the firm of Drake and Goward, but he invested heavily in real estate along the old road, loaned considerable money to his neighbors, and served as one of the original trustees of the North Easton Savings Bank. Kimball also had a long career in politics. He served as Town Clerk and Treasurer from 1853 to 1855 and from 1856 to 1873 and Selectman from 1860 to 1873. In 1856 the good people of Easton elected Kimball, the candidate of the American or Know Nothing Party, to the state legislature. Although they supported some positive reforms, the Know Nothings were blatantly anti-immigrant. Begun in 1849, the party organized through secret clubs whose members when questioned about their activities were supposed to answer "I know nothing." Their primary goal was to prevent foreign-born citizens from gaining office and to stop the spread of foreign ideas like Roman Catholicism. Ironically, considering Kimball's family background, the Know Nothings also generally favored the temperance movement! Like many of his fellow Know Nothings, John Kimball quickly found his way into the new Republican Party. His reward for supporting the new party was an appointment as Postmaster in 1863. The post office remained in his old store until 1882. John Kimball died in 1890.

In 1866, John Kimball's son, John T., bought the old store back from Drake and Goward and operated it until 1872 when he passed it on to his brother George L. Kimball. By 1880 George had opened the Nineteenth Century equivalent of an auto dealership—a carriage repository—to supplement the income from the general store.

This repository or wareroom, as it was also called, was a place where carriages and wagons were sold and should not be confused with Albert M. Hayward's carriage factory at the Five Corners. Hayward moved that business from Poquanticut in the spring of 1886. The original building also was moved to Five Corners drawn, according to Rebecca Flandreau, "by horses, walking around big windlasses." It became an ell on the new factory. Hayward's carriages were popular throughout the area even winning a first prize at the Brockton Fair in 1900.

In 1905 people from the southern part of town organized the Harmony Grange at Harmony Hall in Furnace Village. Two years later George Kimball sold the new organization his carriage repository that was moved across the street onto property donated by Mr. Kimball. The Grange named the building Kimball Hall in honor of its benefactor. The Harmony Grange has been an active and very civic-minded group undertaking many projects for the benefit of the town. For instance, at the dawn of radio between 1923 and 1925, the Harmony Trio performed on the weekly Grange program. The trio of Edna Fraser, Elva Briggs, and Olive Gurney also provided entertainment for the Grange and other town organizations. On a more serious note, during World War II members created 38 Victory Gardens by plowing almost 20 acres. Kimball Hall was a precinct polling place for many years as well. Today, it is a private residence (419 Bay Road), and the Grange #247 again meets at Harmony Hall.

Despite the success of the Kimballs the northwest corner of Five Corners also continued as an important commercial site even after Keith's tavern closed. In the mid-1800's Joel Drake ran a general store there. Drake's store became Jacobson's store and finally Rohdin's store until finally torn down in the late 1960's to make way for the Sport Gas Station that is today's Mobil Station.

Rohdin's store had a gas pump, but the first garage at the Five Corners was on the southwest corner at the Maplewood Garage (490 Foundry Street). Other storekeepers also located at Five Corners. During the late 1800's F. C. Wade had a store a few rods south of the Corners on the east side of Bay Road. At some point, Lemaire's Store with Lindsay's Barbershop occupied the corner between Depot Street and Bay Road across from the Drake's Store site.

Just south of Five Corners was the J.E. Goss Bus and Limousine Company. The company started around the turn of the century with horse drawn "barges", open sided covered wagons, like the Easton Queen. Mr. Goss was one of the few liveryies in town to successfully make the transition from horse power to gasoline power. The company ran buses and limousines into the 1920's.

Shifting demographics in the town led to a resurgence of the Five Corners as a commercial center. In 1968 John Silva opened the Maplewood Ice Cream Shop (682 Depot Street). It was resold in May 1970 and remained in the hands of the same family until closing in February 1995. This town institution got its name from the old Maplewood Duck Farm on Purchase Street whose owner once held the property occupied by the restaurant and Shaw's Plaza.

The area continued to develop with the building of James Antosca's Colonial Village Plaza just west of the Five Corners several years after the opening of Maplewood. With the opening of Shaw's Supermarket in the 1980's and then the Mulberry and Whistlestop Plazas, Five Corners became a commercial focal point for not only Easton but Norton and Mansfield as well. The Five Corners branch of the North Easton Savings Bank, done in a Victorian Revival style, is one of the new architectural highlights of the town.

Immediately to the east of Whistlestop Plaza is an interesting bit of Easton's past called Deadman's Curve. That's the spot where Route 123 seems to sprout a roadside rest area just like an interstate. In reality this was part of the original road. Why it took such a sharp bend at this point is hard to fathom, but on a good day it made travelling very dangerous for out-of-towners, and a number of fatalities occurred. In winter the curve had the uncanny knack of glazing over before any other spot in town. At that time an encounter with the curve could become an epic event that still chills the hearts of any who survived it. In the early 1970's the state straightened the road, but for some reason left the old curve next to the new road. Perhaps like Moby Dick, the old monster was too tough to kill!

Although businesses around the Five Corners remained relatively healthy in the Nineteenth Century, others along Bay Road declined. For example, in 1855 at least three blacksmith shops were there, but by 1871 only one remained. A victim of this decline was the junction of Summer Street and Bay Road. Just before 1840 Alonzo Fuller of Raynham opened a wheelwright business and carriage shop there (now the home at 241 Bay Road). By 1855 the carriage factory, a blacksmith shop, and a general store were at the corner, but the carriage business soon failed perhaps as a result of the financial Panic of 1857. A general store lasted in the area until at least 1871, but it too disappeared by 1886. The farms along this part of the road simply could not sustain a neighborhood center north of Five Corners.

Still, the farms on Bay Road had one reliable product-children. In general during these years the town maintained two schools on Bay Road. Mention of the school on the south part of the road has already been made. In 1870 that building just south of the old

Williams sawmill closed, and the children of the area began attending the Union School at the intersection of Highland Street and South Street (23 Highland Street).

At the same time the school for the northern half of Bay Road was directly opposite Rockland Street. In 1916 town meeting voted to build a school at the corner of Rockland Street and Allen Road, the current home of the Veteran of Foreign Wars. The old Bay Road School was sold at auction and moved to Eddy Street in Mansfield, but its school bell went to the new school.

The Town built a new Bay Road school, completed in 1939, just south of the Five Corners. Partially funded by the federal government, this two-room school had an auditorium in the basement. It was the first school in town whose playground equipment was paid for with tax money rather than through donations. Since 1988, the old school has been the home of the Easton Water Department. Also in this area since the late 1980's is Easton's newest fire station although lack of funds has so far prevented its continuous operation

Before leaving Bay Road, we need to say a few words about the farms that played such a large part in the neighborhood over the years. As the Nineteenth Century progressed, general farming became more difficult in the face of competition from products grown in the rich soils of the Midwest. In Easton this led to a variety of specialized agricultural ventures. For instance, Bay Road played its part in the hops farming enthusiasm documented elsewhere in more detail. Hop kilns operated near the Godfrey House (built in 1737, now 566 Bay Road) on the east side of Bay Road at the Norton line. On the west side of the road also at the Norton line is one of the state's largest cranberry bogs, the Fuller-Hammond Bog. This bog produces berries that are water harvested to make processed cranberry products such as cranberry juice cocktail. It is a giant reminder of the numerous small bogs located throughout the town many years ago. The tiny pond next to Frank Carlson's home at 370 Bay Road may have been one of the many associated with late Nineteenth Century bogs. In the 1960's, the little pond was the site of many neighborhood hockey games hosted by Mr. Carlson's four sons, all of whom served their country during the Vietnam War.

One of the more unusual operations after the turn of this century was Hoag's acorn crusher. Situated near the sites of the old sanitary landfill and the former Easton Sand and Gravel sandpit, the eccentric "Doctor" Hoag kept many small animals. To feed them he paid neighborhood youngsters 10¢ a bag for acorns. He then crushed the acorns under a heavy upright stone wheel turned by a donkey.

The last farms on Bay Road were specialized operations. In 1941, Howard A. Richards of Norton's HARCO Orchards and Poultry Farm established a satellite facility at the old Henault Farm at 345 Bay Road. Unlike the once numerous poultry farms of Easton, HARCO gained a nationwide reputation producing baby chicks for the brown egg industry with a special cross of Rhode Island Reds and Plymouth Rocks developed by Edward Milano and Herbert Hands. The satellite farm closed in the early 1970's.

Also north of the Five Corners, at 297 Bay Road, Antonio Gomes operated an extensive dairy farm until about 1972. Buttonwood Farm (412 Bay Road), operated by the Lewis family on the east side of Bay Road north of Beaver Dam Road, was a large-scale produce farm until the 1980's.

South of the Five Corners Samuel Wright ran two farms for many, many years, one on Route 106 at the current site of Gaslight Village II and the other on Bay Road across

the street from the old Matthew Hayward tavern. When he retired, Mr. Wright sold his Bay Road farm that continues as an extensive dairy and produce business today, the last of many generations of farms which once lined the old road.

The death knell of the old farming regimen came with the increase in property values caused by the arrival of town water in the 1960's. Today, Bay Road has many of the features of Easton's other residential neighborhoods. One hopes that the children of the neighborhood still find the time to tramp the woods and walk the old road as their "ancestors" did as recently as thirty years ago. Bay Road in the "good old days" of the 1960's was a great place to grow up!