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Bridgewater, Massachusetts: A Town in Transition

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2019

### Bridgewater, Massachusetts 1910-1920 (Including Historical Background) Volume I

Benjamin A. Spence

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**Bridgewater, Massachusetts  
1910-1920  
(Including Historical Background)  
Volume I**

**Dr. Benjamin A. Spence**

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(2018)

## **An Explanation**

For the last ten years or so, I have had the pleasure of delving into the history of Bridgewater, Massachusetts. My concentration is on the first quarter of the twentieth century, providing historical background when appropriate. Although my research and writing are ongoing, I have prepared drafts of a number of topics, which I have explored at length, with the hope that this material will be of interest to those interested in the long and rich history of this town. I request that credit be given if my findings are used by other writers or those making oral presentations.

As my study has proceeded, many people have been helpful, and I hope to thank all of them as my research and writing continue. At this point, let me mention just a few who have been especially supportive. Many thanks to the Trustees of Bridgewater's Public Library for allowing me access to the sources in the town library and for the professional help from the research librarians under the competent direction of Mary O'Connell. I also appreciate the kind assistance of staff members at the Bridgewater Town Hall in the use of town records. Without the constant guidance and patience of Dr. Steven G. Young, Professor of Music at Bridgewater State University, I would have been at a loss many times in the use of the computer. How can I fully express my thanks to Sylvia B. Larson who was willing since I started this project to spend numerous hours using her fine editing and writing skills to improve these drafts. Her probing historical mind and her sharing of my interest in Bridgewater's history proved invaluable to me. Any errors in the text, of course, are solely mine. What a great joy it was to share my findings with S. Mabell Bates, who as a friend, head of the Special Collections at the Bridgewater State University Library, and member of the Bridgewater Historical Commission, provided me with valuable historical material and was a constant source of inspiration. My research has also been enriched by many conversations with Robert Wood, a member of the Bridgewater Historical Commission and the town's leading authority on property deeds. He has been most generous in sharing his findings with me. Lastly, my research, particularly concerning Bridgewater Normal School, would have been far less interesting without my many conversations with David K. Wilson, long associated with public relations and institutional research at Bridgewater State University. I especially appreciate his sharing of his more than considerable historical knowledge of this institution, videotaping my tours of Bridgewater's School Street and Central Square, and publicizing my essays, especially the one on the Gates House.

In preparing my essays, I also owe a special debt of gratitude to James "Mike" Bois, George B. Rizer, and David R. Moore, citizens of Bridgewater who contributed in different ways to a collection of historical pictures of the town. Bois, one of the Bridgewater Historical Collectors, for many years gathered over 450 scenes of Bridgewater, many of which were included in the 1987 and 1994 pictorial histories prepared by the Collectors. Equally important was the contribution of Rizer, a professional photographer for the *Boston Globe*, who with his artistic skill reproduced all the pictures in these two works, "bringing to life some that were faded or in some way defective." Thanks to the skillful and time-consuming work of Moore, chairman of Bridgewater's Historical Commission, over 500 pictures, including many found in the two earlier pictorial histories, have now been placed on a computer disc, labeled the Rizer Collection. This project has created an historical treasure easily accessible to

those interested in the town's rich heritage. I will continue to include pictures from the collection in future essays.

A note concerning bibliography: At some juncture, I will add an essay on the sources used in my study. For now, the numerous footnotes will give readers a good idea of the research materials used in this historical account of the Town of Bridgewater.

My essays on education, churches, stores and services, manufacturing, transportation, fire service, and the Parker-Gates-Shaw House in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, concentrate on the years 1900 to 1910. The two essays on law and order take this story to 1820, and hopefully a third essay will carry this important topic to 1925.

This tenth essay is the first of two to discuss life in Bridgewater between 1910 and 1920, and a third one will explore the town's reaction to and involvement in the Great War, 1914-1918, and the peace settlement that followed.

Copies of my ten essays to date can be found in the public libraries of Bridgewater, West Bridgewater, and Brockton, as well as in the Maxwell Library of Bridgewater State University, the Memorial Building of the Old Bridgewater Historical Society in West Bridgewater, and the Old Colony Historical Society in Taunton, Massachusetts.

An electronic version of my essays is available on Bridgewater State University's repository Virtual Commons (<http://vc.bridgew.edu/spence/>). I was delighted when Michael Somers, Director of the Maxwell Library, proposed this project. Many thanks to Ellen Dubinsky, Digital Services Librarian, and her staff for so competently putting my essays on line. While this electronic source allows readers to see if a particular historical item is referred to in any of my essays, none of them included an index. Hopefully, this scholarly tool will soon be added to my on-line writings.

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### *Introduction*

None of the inhabitants of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, in the early 1920's would have been able to give eyewitness accounts of the separation of the Old Bridgewater into four separate towns a century earlier. It became generally known, however, that this political development included the creation of present-day Bridgewater, once the Southern Parish of the old town. My research and writing, except for two long essays dealing mainly with law and order in the South Parish, has dealt with Bridgewater's past between the late nineteenth century and the early 1920's. While I hope to see an historian someday write an extended account of the town covering the better part of the nineteenth century, my documentation indicates reliance on earlier writers who provided me with important historical background on the topics I have written about at this point. By far the most important primary source aiding me in creating an image of Bridgewater as a "Town in Transition" was its local newspaper the *Independent*. From its inception in 1877 to 1925, this publication faithfully reported on virtually every aspect of the community's life in varying degrees. By perusing its weekly editions for these years, it became evident that Bridgewater in a number of ways was a microcosm of an America undergoing great changes as it became more industrialized, urbanized, and ethnically mixed. The following essay mainly deals with this town's evolving transportation system and configuration of retail stores in the second decade of the twentieth century, albeit retaining some continuity with its long history as a small and quiet community. <sup>1</sup>

#### **A Brief Look at Bridgewater's Past**

From 1656 until the 1770's, the original and much larger Bridgewater was an integral part of the British Empire, first as the tenth town in Plymouth Colony and, after 1691, of the Province of Massachusetts. Despite the division of the old town into five parish-precincts between 1716 and 1743, Bridgewater politically remained intact after the American Revolution until four of these parish-precincts became separate political communities in the early 1820's. The South Parish, including its south-west section, which had become part of Titicut Parish in 1743, became the present-day Town of Bridgewater without following the path of formal incorporation as did East, North, and West Bridgewater. <sup>2</sup>

#### **Geographic and Demographic Considerations**

Both continuity and change characterized Bridgewater's history during the years between the early 1820's and the second decade of the twentieth century. The town's geographic size of twenty-eight square miles

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<sup>1</sup>This current essay will be the first of three to discuss the history of Bridgewater between 1910 and the early 1920's, with each of them relying on my previous studies which generally dwelt on the first decade of the twentieth century.

<sup>2</sup>Nahum Mitchell, History of the Early Settlement of Bridgewater, in Plymouth County, Massachusetts, Including an Extensive Family Register (Bridgewater: Reprinted by Henry T. Pratt, 1897); originally printed in 1840, this work, which hereafter will be cited as Mitchell) offers a wealth of information on the early history of Bridgewater; Joshua E. Crane "History of Bridgewater," Hurd's History of Plymouth County (Philadelphia: The J. W. Lewis & Co., 1884); this source provides much information on Bridgewater to 1884 and hereafter will be cited as Crane; History Highlights: Bridgewater, Massachusetts -A Commemorative Journal, ed. by Katherine M. Doherty (Taunton, Massachusetts: Published for The Bridgewater Bicentennial Commission by William S. Sullwold, Publishing, 1976); my many references to this work will hereafter be cited as HH.

and its boundaries remained essentially the same. Pleasantly “situated...about midway between Boston and Fall River, ten miles from Taunton and eighteen miles from Plymouth...,” its immediate neighbors were “East and West Bridgewater on the north, Halifax on the east, Middleboro on the south, and Raynham on the west.”

Bridgewater, mirroring to some degree the nation’s great growth of population, including that of Massachusetts, had remained demographically a small town. Its numbers went from almost 1,900 in 1830 to 9,381 in 1915; this latter figure placed the town 65<sup>th</sup> among the state’s communities. About two-thirds of the latter figure were town natives, with English-Yankees still the most numerous, followed by those Irish whose ancestors had emigrated to America beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century. The increase in the town’s population from 5,806 in 1900 to that of fifteen years later would factor in the continuous arrival of Irish immigrants, emigrants from southern and eastern Europe, Canada, and around 2,800 inmates of the State Farm. While some folks at the time questioned the accuracy of the 1915 census, the make-up of Bridgewater’s population was obviously far more varied than it had been when the South Parish in a de facto way assumed the name and historical tradition of the original town dating back to 1656.<sup>3</sup>

### **Agriculture and Manufacturing**

If Bridgewater’s population in the second decade of the twentieth century was considerably larger and much more ethnically varied than in the 1820’s, so was its economy, in particular how its citizens of fourteen and over were gainfully employed. As I point out in my essay on manufacturing in the town between 1900 and 1910, the growth of industry in the previous century inexorably eclipsed that of agriculture, the economic foundation of the South Parish between 1716 and its emergence as a separate political entity over a century later. Spearheading this trend was the growth of iron output after the American Revolution. Despite a lingering and not-without merit reputation as a good farming community, statistics compiled for the bicentennial of Old Bridgewater in 1856 clearly show the primary role played by industry in the town’s economy. Bridgewater was widely referred to as an “Iron Town.” In 1875, the Bridgewater Iron Company was the community’s premiere manufacturing enterprise, producing goods worth close to a million dollars, paying over two thousand dollars in town taxes, and, as the town’s biggest employer, providing work for about 300 men. But this venerable iron works had reached its apogee and in the early 1890’s was bought out by the Stanley Tool Company of New Britain, Connecticut. While this firm was an important and integral part of Bridgewater’s economy into the 1920’s, it did not play the leading economic role once held by its predecessor. Rather, in 1901 the W. H. McElwain Co., manufacturer of shoes, was the town’s leading employer, with 725 hands producing 4,200 pairs of shoes daily at its three-year-old wooden factory

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<sup>3</sup>Mitchell, p. 58; Hosea Kingman, “Bridgewater,” The Plymouth County Directory (Middleboro, Massachusetts: Stillman Pratt Company, 1867), pp. 29-30; Federal Census, 1900, Part II, p. 646; Census of Massachusetts, 1915, pp. 55,196, 326; the decennial state census, along with the national census, provide a plethora of statistical data; Bridgewater Independent, Jan. 15, Feb. 12, March 12, July 23, Dec. 31, 1915; this local weekly newspaper was first published in 1876 by Henry T. Pratt, under name Every Saturday; since the end of that year, it has been known as the Bridgewater Independent and will be cited hereafter as the BI; the counting of the inmates of the State Farm in the 1915 census explains why Bridgewater’s male population was close to twice that of the female population and was a factor that would figure in the number of the town’s young men drafted into the army in 1917-1918.



between the railroad tracks and Perkins Street. There was no real challenge to McElwain's position in Bridgewater as the leading shoe business until the L. Q. White Shoe Company began production on July 6, 1909, in a newly completed factory on Spring Street. By the summer of 1914, these two shoe firms accounted by far for the major portion of the town's working population of almost 5,000. By contrast, those gainfully employed in agriculture, forestry, and animal husbandry numbered 764, according to the 1915 state census.<sup>4</sup>

### **An Evolving Transportation System**

Paralleling demographic and economic changes, Bridgewater had also witnessed an evolving transportation system. Along with Boston, Worcester, and Fall River, the three largest cities in the Bay State, as well as many small towns, most parts of Bridgewater in 1915 were blessed with an adequate system of transportation. Anyone resting a bit on one of the Common's benches surely noticed the great number of townsfolk who relied on commercial businesses in Central Square. Equally obvious, and perhaps more entertaining, was a chaotic traffic configuration consisting of horse-drawn conveyances, bicycles, trolleys, and automobiles. The steam trains could not be seen from the town's center, but the sound of their whistles could be heard (at least by citizens with good hearing) on their arrivals and departures from the depot situated less than a half mile northeast on the corner of Broad and Spring Streets. While the days of relying mainly on horses to get thither and yon were long past, the 1914 Annual Town Report cites 373 horses being assessed for tax purposes. Unlike a century later, it was common for Bridgewater folks in the years between 1911 and 1915 to regularly see horses performing a myriad of routine tasks in the town's economic, civic, social, political, and recreational life. A few horses elicited more than their share of attention, including the black pair used by the funeral business of Prophett and Flynn and those ready at any moment to carry firefighters and their apparatus to the scene of a fire. Writing many years later about her early life in Bridgewater, Louise Dickinson Rich, in a bit of an overstatement, thought the horses in the town stable in back of the fire station on School Street "were more important, more real personalities, to us than most of the adults we knew." Interestingly enough, both Prophett and Flynn and the town's fire department began to use motorized transportation in 1915, when Rich was in her middle teens.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>"Statistics of Industry in 1855," Celebration of the Two-Hundredth Anniversary of the Incorporation of Bridgewater, Massachusetts (Boston: Printed by John Wilson and Son, 1856), p. 163; Census of Massachusetts, 1915, p. 196; David R. Moore, "Economy: Business, Industry. Agriculture," HH, pp. 81-85; Moore, the authority on Bridgewater's industrial history, has added much to our knowledge of the Bridgewater Iron Company by spearheading efforts to preserve its physical remains on the east side of High Street at the Town River; Benjamin A. Spence, Manufacturing in Bridgewater, 1900-1910 (Including Extensive Historical Background), pp. 5-6, 11-14, 24-27, 29-32, 33-43, 44-47; Orra L. Stone, History of Massachusetts Industries-Their Inception, Growth, and Success (Boston-Chicago: The S. T. Clarke Publishing Co.), Vol. II, p. 1198; the last three sources cited above discuss other industrial outfits which were part of Bridgewater's industrial growth from the 1820's to 1914.

<sup>5</sup>Spence, "Horses" Transportation in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, 1900-1910; Including Extensive Historical Background, (2009), pp. 1-16; "Report of Assessors," Annual Town Report, 1914," p. 41; Census of Massachusetts, 1915, p. 54; BI, May 26, July 21, Nov. 10, Dec. 15, 1911, Feb. 12, March 1, 22, April 5, May 10, 31, June 7, 28, July 12, 1912, May 9, Aug. 15, 29, Oct. 17, 1913, April 17, May 15, Aug. 7, Sept. 15, 1914, Jan. 29, March 5, July 2, 16, 23, 1915, March 3, 1916; Louise Dickinson Rich, Innocence Under the Elms (Orleans, Massachusetts: Parnassus Imprints, 1983), p. 119; first published in 1955, this last work is a must for anyone trying to understand life in Bridgewater in the early years of the twentieth century, keeping in mind that this

## Railroads

More essential to Bridgewater's industrial well-being and connection to the outside world by this time, however, was rail transportation; perhaps horses had found some consolation in the new man-made transportation frequently being called "iron horses." Most likely only inhabitants over seventy-five remembered the passing of the first train through Bridgewater and the building of its first depot in 1846. This was a part of a significant project which came to be called Old Colony Railroad Line. Until the early 1890's, this company was instrumental in the expansion of a railroad network in eastern Massachusetts, serving the needs of Bridgewater's traveling public and, equally important, helping to carry raw materials to the town's factories and their manufactured products to state and national markets. As part of a movement to unite the nation's railroad lines, the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad Company in 1893, through a leasing system rather than direct ownership, took control of the Old Colony Line, naming it the Old Colony Division of the Consolidated Railroad. Despite the occasional use of this nomenclature for a number of years, the town's annual list of taxpayers and the weekly train schedules clearly show the control of the railroad system serving Bridgewater after 1893 was in the hands of what was commonly referred to as the N. Y., N. H. and H. Railroad. A new depot, initially planned by the Old Colony line, was opened in 1894, more or less on the site of the first station. Some folks in 1915 remembered reading the detailed description of this new attractive addition to the town found in the *Bridgewater Independent* of February 10, 1894. Many more, I suspect, had become aware of how important rail transportation was to the town's economic well-being.<sup>6</sup>

## Bicycles

While Bridgewater inhabitants continued to rely on horses, railroads, and human legs in 1915, three other forms of transportation had become available in the course of the previous twenty-five years. The first of these, although hardly the most important, was the bicycle, a technological innovation, aptly described by one writer as "an efficient translation of human muscle effort into motion...." In 1878, a factory in Hartford, Connecticut, became the first American one to manufacture a type of bicycle, but its price was well beyond the means of most people, including those in the small town of Bridgewater. During the following decade, several innovations,

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account was written by an articulate woman who, along with her sister Alice, moved to Bridgewater in 1905, when her father James H. became the editor of the *Bridgewater Independent*.

<sup>6</sup>BI, February 10, 1894, June 29, 1900, Aug. 16, 1901; Spence, "Railroads," *Transportation in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, 1900-1910*, (2009), pp. 16-36; Spence, *Manufacturing in Bridgewater, 1900-1910* (2008), includes numerous references to the importance of rail transportation; William J. Cunningham, "Transportation," *Commonwealth History of Massachusetts*, ed. by Albert Bushnell Hart (New York: Russell & Russell, 1930), Vol. 5, pp. 402-404; The "Highlights" Staff, "Transportation," *HH*, p. 178; at some point I hope to write a separate essay on transportation in Bridgewater between 1911 and 1925; my considerable research shows how important railroads were to the town's economy during the years of the Great War; *Townscape Institute*, p. 36; this comprehensive survey of Bridgewater's historic architecture was done in the 1980's under the direction of Edward W. Gordon and copies can be found in the Bridgewater Public Library; this report included the following statement: "The architect of this station has not been determined, despite a thorough search in Bridgewater and Boston archives;" the detailed article in the *Bridgewater Independent* of February 10, 1894, however, cites Bradford L. Gilbert of New York as the station's architect and its contractor as A. Fales & Sons of South Framingham; "Old Colony Railway," [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old\\_Colony\\_Railroad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Colony_Railroad), pp. 1-16; anyone interested in a chronological account of the Old Colony Railroad, including its years as a Division of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad, might wish to consult this last source.

including the perfection of the safety bicycle in 1887, prepared the way for the mass production of this new form of transportation at much more reasonable prices. Hal Goodnough, a center for Bridgewater's 1922 High School Basketball Team and later elected a member of the Massachusetts School Boy Coaches Hall of Fame, recalls buying his first bicycle around 1910 for twenty dollars from Whilcomb's Bike shop on Main Street. One only has to scan the *Bridgewater Independent* between 1890 and 1915 to see the frequency of local news items and ads of Central Square commercial businesses dealing with some positive aspect of this new form of transportation, especially its social, work-related, and recreational values.<sup>7</sup>

As with other modes of transportation, accidents involving bicycles occurred with a degree of regularity in the three decades after they first appeared in Bridgewater. Mishaps involved single drivers, as well as two driving in tandem. Others resulted from different forms of transportation, including motorcycles beginning in 1912, vying for space on the town's busy streets. Particularly vexing and menacing to many townsfolk was the practice of bikers who rode on sidewalks. As early as June 20, 1885, the *Independent* included the following item: "A gentleman wishes us to remark that bicyclers should use more care in riding on the sidewalks, especially in the evening. One rider in particular seems to monopolize the sidewalks, as though he was the owner, furiously ringing his gong to get out of his lordship's way." Despite a State law and a town ordinance prohibiting this dangerous practice, bicycle riding on the sidewalks continued into the new century. In 1908, according to the *Independent*, "an old lady was knocked down by a bicycle rider on a sidewalk and ... a little girl was ground into the earth and caught between the revolving wheels of a bicycle ridden on a sidewalk." More than once, the town selectmen promised to crackdown on this "well-nigh universal" violation of the law. But, alas, without much success. In May of 1913, after "numerous complaints" were made to the selectmen concerning people being run into by bicyclists riding on the sidewalks, police were instructed to arrest "future" violators of the law. In July 1915, Harry W. Swift, appointed as the first chief of police in Bridgewater in March, warned those who persisted in riding on the sidewalks "will find themselves in the Brockton Police court one of these fine mornings unless they pay more attention to the laws of the Commonwealth..." Perhaps in the long run this more assertive policy had some impact, but in the annual Report of the Police Department issued on December 31, 1915, only one offence of a bicycler using a sidewalk was noted. Undoubtedly, many more bicyclists continued to break the law, with some riders reasoning that it was riskier to share streets with horses, trolleys, and motorized vehicles.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>BI, April 11, 1891, July 16, 1892, May 21, 1897, Aug. 11, Oct. 27, 1899, March 13, 1908, June 30, 1911, March 22, 1912; Hal Goodnough, "Bridgewater About 1910," HH, p. 232; Tales Around the Common: Bridgewater, Massachusetts, edited by Dorothy Lord Mann, Arthur C. Lord, and J. Kenneth Moore (Printed by Dorr's Print Shop, Bridgewater, Harry B. Harding & Son, Inc., Whitman, Massachusetts, 1988), p. 10; Ann Norton Greene, Horses at Work: Harnessing Power in Industrial America (Cambridge, Massachusetts-London, England: Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 240, 256-257, 259, 264; Spence, "Bicycles in Bridgewater," Transportation in Bridgewater, 1900-1910, pp. 88-92; Mary Beth Norton, et al, A People and a Nation: A History of the United States, Volume B, Brief/Fifth Edition (Boston-New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), p. 374.

<sup>8</sup>BI, June 20, 1885, April 28, May 12, 1899, June 1, July 1, 1900, June 28, July 19, 1901, Sept. 18, 1903, July 21, 1905, June 8, 1906, July 19, 1907, Oct. 30, Nov. 20, 1908, April 1, 1910, March 12, May 17, June 14, July 19, Aug. 2, 1912, May 30, July 11, Aug. 1, Sept. 5, 1913, July 31, Dec. 31, 1915, Sept. 30, 1921; Spence, "Bicycles in Bridgewater," Transportation in Bridgewater 1900-1910, p. 92; "Report of the Police Department," Annual

## Electric Street Cars (Trolleys)

The most-widely used form of transportation in Bridgewater during the first two decades of the century were electric street cars, commonly known as trolleys. While lagging behind some of its neighbors, due in part to the national financial crisis of 1893 and ensuing depression, the trolleys first made their way through Bridgewater on June 14, 1897, allowing its inhabitants to reach nearby Taunton and Brockton for ten to fifteen cents. During the next several years, folks in Bridgewater found it easy to travel to and from other communities, as street railway lines in various towns and cities in eastern Massachusetts and beyond began to interconnect. This development was formalized in the Spring of 1901, when over thirty railway lines joined to create the Old Colony Street Railway Company. Until 1911, Bridgewater patrons of trolley transportation were to ride the streetcars of this merger. No attempt is made here to discuss the great impact this form of transportation had on the economic, social, and other aspects of this community's life during the first decade of the twentieth century. Those interested in this topic, however, might wish to consult the extensive discussion found in my essay on this mode of transportation serving the town between 1897 and 1910. The one major exception to the paucity of physical remains of Bridgewater's trolley system created in this formative decade is a medium-size brick structure at the junction of Pleasant, Swift, and Birch Streets erected in 1904 as an electric substation for the Old Colony Street Railway Company. While no town resident today would have witnessed its construction, some older citizens may still remember it as a Veterans of Foreign Wars post, named after James A. Oliver, Jr., the first Bridgewater soldier killed in what became known as World War One.<sup>9</sup>

In a short item on July 7, 1911, the *Bridgewater Independent* informed its readers: the "Old Colony Street Railway Co. passed out of existence at Midnight last Friday...." Two weeks later, they further learned about a new consolidated enterprise known as the Bay State Street Railway Company taking control of almost all of "830 miles of track in the system...located in eastern Massachusetts...." During the next eight years, Bridgewater folks would continue to ride the trolleys operated by this enterprise. From the start, its management faced a plethora of challenges, dealing with such matters as fares, schedules, and maintenance and /or replacement of tracks, cars, poles, and electric wires. Accidents, labor compensation, safety, and complaints about poor service, and suits, were additional challenges faced by the street railway, all the while aware that investors in the company hoped to receive their just rewards.<sup>10</sup>

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Town Report, 1915, p. 75; "Police Department," HH, p. 59; in this last source Gloria W. Moran made contributions to Chapter 4: "The Political and Governmental Development of Bridgewater."

<sup>9</sup>Spence, "Electric Streetcars in Bridgewater--1890-1900," and "Electric Streetcars in Bridgewater--1901-1910," Transportation in Bridgewater --1900-1910, pp. 36-66, 66-81; "Report of Committee on War Memorial," Annual Town Report, 1921, p. 144; HH, pp. 178, 181; David R. Moore, Bridgewater: Images of America (Charleston, SC.: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), p. 39.

<sup>10</sup>BI, Feb. 10, July 7, 28, Aug. 18, Sept. 1, 8, 15, 22, Oct. 13, 20, 1911, Feb. 16, May 24, 31, June 14, 28, July 12, Aug. 25, Sept. 13, 20, 1912, Feb. 21, May 23, 30, June 6, July 25, Aug. 1, 15, 29, Sept. 12, Oct. 3, 1913, Jan. 9, 23, Feb. 27, April 3, 17, Nov. 13, 1914, Jan. 22, April 30, May 7, Aug. 27, Sept. 10, 24, Oct. 8, Nov. 26, 1915, May 5, 12, 26, June 2, 1916; in doing research on Bridgewater's involvement in the trolley system which served

Two early steps taken by Bay State were applauded by many Bridgewater citizens. To “accommodate the constantly increasing traffic in Central Square,” caused by “the steady growth of the town,” this company within three months of taking over the trolley system reconfigured the “turnout” on the western side of the Square which served as the location for incoming and departing trolleys. Hopefully this would relieve the congestion resulting from a confluence of bicycles, trolleys, horse-drawn conveyances, motor-powered vehicles, and townsfolk, who in the several years before the Great War still did most of their shopping in and around Central Square. To understand the company’s second accomplishment one needs to go back to 1906, when the town’s selectmen granted the Old Colony line the right to carry freight and express within Bridgewater. Within a year, however, the trolley express business had begun to create traffic problems as deliveries were unloaded on the sidewalk in front of the Tory House and Churchill’s dry good store on the western side of Central Square, where they would be picked up by any number of local carriers. To remedy this situation, Bay State, at a hearing in the “selectmen’s room in the Town hall” on January 22, 1912, received permission to connect established tracks on Broad Street with new ones on Perkins Street, where the company planned to erect a “terminal building [to the rear of the property of the W. H. McElwain Shoe Co.].” Accommodating two express cars, this new facility began its operations in June, serving as a transfer station for “vast amount of freight and express matter” between such places as Taunton, New Bedford, and Brockton in Massachusetts, as well as Providence, Rhode Island. Equally important, if not more so for the businesses and inhabitants of Bridgewater, Bay State extended the express service by “picking up and delivering packages by teams....” within the town. E. W. Hayward was in charge of the local terminal, while Mrs. Haywood ran the office. <sup>11</sup>

The trolleys, or “electrics” as they were often called, continued to be widely patronized by Bridgewater folks in the second decade of the twentieth century. This mode of transportation allowed many local and out-of-town shoe workers to safely reach the McElwain and White shoe factories at a reasonable fare. Along with other town inhabitants, industrial laborers, in some cases for the first time, could enjoy evenings, holidays and vacations by taking trolleys to desirable locations within and beyond the town’s borders. Most likely, some folks in Bridgewater took advantage of *Trolley Trips* advertised by the Bay State Company. Commenting on the use of trolleys during the recent Labor Day weekend, the *Independent* noted on September 6, 1912: riding “on the electric cars during the holidays ...was very heavy, although not as great as” the previous years, adding that “uncertain weather...undoubtedly kept many from taking trips.” On July 10, 1914, a week after briefly calling attention to the slaying of Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, and his wife, the Duchess of Hohenberg, the same newspaper in a slightly shorter item informed its readers that travel “through the town was

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eastern Massachusetts between the 1890’s and the 1920’s, I am again reminded of how central the *Bridgewater Independent* is in providing detailed information on so many aspects of the town’s history in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

<sup>11</sup>BI, Sept. 15, 22, 29, 1911, Jan. 5, 19, 26, Feb. 9, June 21, Nov. 15, 1912; Spence, Transportation in Bridgewater 1900-1910, pp. 78-81; “The Bridgewater Historical Collectors,” Pictorial History: Bridgewater, Massachusetts (Rockland, Massachusetts: Printed by Fairmont Printing, Inc. 1994), p. 22; see page 3 of this essay for more information on this last source.

extremely heavy during the holidays,” with electric cars “loaded to the limit” and hundreds of automobiles passing “through the square on their way to the Cape....” (Typical of local newspapers, which mostly reported hometown news, this latter edition of the *Independence* also featured a longer article entitled “Was a Success: Fourth of July Celebration Pleas'd Everybody.”)<sup>12</sup>

While few Bridgewater inhabitants could have anticipated the demise of their trolley network in the decade or so after the war, earlier signs indicated the system’s economic weaknesses and challenges. In February of 1915, Bay State announced its decision to “discontinue its express service, that is picking up and delivering packages by teams....” Hayward would no longer run the local terminal, but would “engage in a private trucking business in Bridgewater and to adjoining cities.” Of greater import was the increasing recognition that the company was hardly in good financial condition. “Most of us will acknowledge,” averred the *Independent* on September 10, “that the Bay State Street Railway has not manifest any of the outward signs of excessive prosperity, giving credence to the contention that it needs more revenue. Witness the decadent rolling stock and road beds as we are acquainted with them locally, also their dividend record.” In November the company began to make its case for an increase in trolley fares before the state’s Public Service Commission, but it would not be until 1916 that the Bay State request was granted. In the long run, however, a modest increase proved not to be a lifeline for Bay State. With hindsight, we know that individually-motorized vehicles, including automobiles, busses, and trucks, would take the place of trolleys as the dominant form of transportation in the 1920’s.<sup>13</sup>

### **Motorized Vehicles (Emphasis on Automobiles)**

The automobile was still in its infancy between 1900 and 1910, with few predicting it would play a major role in shaping the economic and social life of the United States, including that of Bridgewater, during the new century. Only a small number of inhabitants of this small Massachusetts community would have placed much credence in Henry Ford’s prediction in 1909 of his ability “to democratize the automobile” by making it possible for “everybody ...to afford one.” Reminiscing about the early 1900’s, Ruth Hooper Bishop and Arthur C. Lord, two of Bridgewater Historical Collectors, and Louise Dickinson Rich, author of *Innocence Under the Elms*, all commented on the paucity of automobiles. Most Bridgewater folks were surely aware that the rapid growth of the trolley system in the first decade of the twentieth century was already allowing folks at all economic levels to enjoy the benefits of cheap and reliable transportation, albeit subject to the “inconvenience of timetables” and lack of “private space.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>BI, Sept. 6, 1912, July 10, 1914; Bay State Street Railway Co., “Trolley Trips, 1912,” website-[http://www.oldimprints.com/pictures/42255\\_2.jpg](http://www.oldimprints.com/pictures/42255_2.jpg).

<sup>13</sup>BI, Nov. 15, 1912, Feb. 19, March 12, May 7, Sept. 10, Nov. 12, 19, Dec. 31, 1915, Oct. 6, 1916.

<sup>14</sup>BI, July 31, 1903; Ruth Hooper Bishop, “My Memories of Bridgewater, 1908-1920,” Arthur C. Lord, “First Quarter of the Century in Bridgewater,” Tales Around the Common: Bridgewater, Massachusetts, edited by Dorothy Lord Mann, Arthur C. Lord, J. Kenneth Moore (Bridgewater, Ma.: Dorr’s Print Shop; Whitman, Ma.: Harry B. Harding & Son, Inc., 1988), pp. 41 and 48; Dickinson Rich, Innocence Under the Elms, p. 142; James J.

It is difficult to say how many Bridgewater men became proud owners of motor vehicles between 1900 and 1910, especially since many “cars” spotted in the town were owned by drivers from surrounding communities. One citizen, cited in the *Independent* on August 30, 1907, placed the count at twenty. Whatever the accuracy of his estimation, this local newspaper found it newsworthy to mention individuals who purchased different makes of this new mode of transportation, a reporting practice that would generally end as ownership became more common after the Great War. Not surprisingly, these early owners, unlike the vast majority of town citizens, had one thing in common-- the wherewithal to buy a car. Some Bridgewater doctors, most prominently Albert F. Hunt, Franklin L. Warren, and W. F. Whitmarsh, were in this select group. We know little about the use of their automobiles in their medical practices in the early years of the century, however. Owners and/or managers of Bridgewater’s manufacturing firms were also part of the privileged few who enjoyed the benefits and pleasures of riding in the “private space” of their individually-powered motor vehicles. Charles R. Fitch, who in 1902 had moved to Bridgewater from Hartford, Connecticut, to become the Superintendent of the Stanley Iron Works, is cited by one source as the town’s first owner of an automobile. While some evidence challenges this assertion, we know that Fitch and his wife made extensive use of their cars, taking trips to such places as East Gloucester, Massachusetts, in 1905, and New York State in 1908. Lymann Cornell of Bridgewater’s Prattown section and Fred L. Emerson, Superintendent of the McElwain shoe factory for eight years and well-known for his civic activities, also deserve to be mentioned in this limited coverage of early car owners. In June of 1904, in what must have been the longest auto trip by town citizens up to this time, they motored to Missouri to attend the St. Louis Fair.<sup>15</sup>

If the vast majority of Bridgewater inhabitants harbored little hope of owning an automobile, it was impossible for average folks not to take note of this emerging mode of transportation. They grew accustomed, especially in the summer, to seeing town thoroughfares traversed by motorized vehicles of various makes, many owned by out-of-town vacationers on their way to Cape Cod, via Summer Street; the section of what is now Route 18 between Bridgewater and Middleboro was not paved until the early 1930’s. With automobiles increasingly vying for space with horses, trolleys, and shoppers who in the early 1900’s continued to rely heavily on local retailers, traffic congestion in Central Square became a daily occurrence. The *Independent’s* weekly list of town happenings invariably cited accidents frequently involving some combination of the three forms of local

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Flink, “Automobiles,” Reader’s Companion to American History, edited by Eric Foner and John A. Garraty (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), pp. 64-68; readers of my essay on transportation in Bridgewater to 1910 might wish to note my omission of the “I” in Flink’s name; Spence, “The Advent of the Automobile in Bridgewater,” Transportation-1900-1910, pp. 81-82; William Greenleaf, “Ford, Henry,” Encyclopedia of American Biography, edited by John A. Garraty and Jerome L. Sternstein (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1974), pp. 368-371; Greene, Horses at Work, p. 265; Frederick Lewis Allen, The Big Change: America Transforms Itself, 1900-1950 (New York: Perennial Library-Harper & Row, Publishers, 1952), pp. 97-101; Norton, et al, A People and a Nation: A History of the United States, Brief Edition, Volume B: since 1865, p. 340.

<sup>15</sup>BI, May 10, June 28, July 5, 1901, June 6, Oct. 31, 1902, July 31, Sept. 4, 1903, May 27, June 17, Oct. 28, 1904, May 12, Aug. 4, 1905, June 8, 1906, July 19, Aug. 30, 1907, June 26, Aug. 28, 1908, Dec. 10, 1909, April 1, 8, June 10, Nov. 11, 1910, Feb. 22, July 24, 1924; “Charles R. Fitch--Superintendent,” HH, p. 263; “Hunt, Albert F. [M. D.] 1875 to 1963--Physician,” HH, p. 266; Spence, Transportation, 1900-1910, pp. 83-84; it is interesting to note that in 1924 there were more than 1,000 automobiles registered in Bridgewater.

transportation, with speeding by motorists often the cause. Already noted for the screeching sounds of trolleys as they turned from Main Street to Central Square, Simmons's corner, the site of Bridgewater's leading meat market since 1889, now had to endure the antics of speeding motorists; for many years to come this location was the town's most perilous location for auto mishaps. In an era of increasing regulations by the states, it is not surprising that Massachusetts set speed limits for automobile between eight and fifteen mph. The General Court also enacted legislation requiring every automobile be registered and every driver be licensed. On Sunday June 4, 1905, Bridgewater officials tried to enforce the state's laws on speeding by recording the number [plates] of offending motorists as they drove on Main Street from High Street to the southern end of Central Square. The police tactic was thwarted when the passengers in the first machine "noticed...the move," with their driver shortly thereafter reversing direction to "apparently" warn other motorists headed toward the Common.<sup>16</sup>

A few pedestrians might have noticed the "speed trap" on that particular Sunday morning. Many more frequenting the Square on any given weekday, however, were aware of several retail and service businesses that had begun catering to a small, but growing, number of their fellow citizens who could afford the luxury of owning an automobile. George J. Alcott, arriving from Chelsea, Massachusetts, in 1898 to take over the Bridgewater Inn, located on the northeastern section of Central Square, was among the first in the town to surmise how motorized vehicles might impact some commercial enterprises. Perhaps influenced by the author Winston Churchill's automobile stop at the hostelry on July 19, 1903, on his way to New Hampshire, the Inn's new manager a few years later built a cement garage and installed a gasoline tank "to meet the constantly increasing demand of that portion of his patronage," which chose traveling by this new mode of transportation. This enterprising proprietor, who paradoxically played a leading role among the few in Bridgewater advocating socialism, submitted ads to the *Independent* announcing: "Automobile Parties Accommodated at the Bridgewater Inn." Thomas W. Crocker in the Independent Building and Lewis G. Lowe and Son in the Bridgewater Savings Bank Block, both located on the western side of Central Square, began to advertise automobile insurance. In 1907, Crocker, a well-known businessman and activist in town affairs, boasted of selling a "fire extinguisher ...specifically designed for fastening on to the running board of your auto," ready "at a moment's notice, to put out a fire," hardly the most assuring words for a would-be buyer of a new car. The Lowe firm, the "Oldest Insurance Agency" in Bridgewater, began to consider offering automobile insurance as the decade came to an end. By the spring of 1911 the following Lowe's ad appeared in the *Independent*: "Automobile Insurance! Is one branch of our General Insurance business and we have the best in this as in other departments." William A. Bassett, whose father J. Gardner had established the Bridgewater Brick Company in 1901, also soon realized the economic possibilities associated with the advent

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<sup>16</sup>BI, Sept. 2, 1902, July 31, Aug. 28, 1903, June 10, 25, July 8, 22, 29, Sept. 9, 1904, June 2, 9, Aug. 4, 1905, May 11, Aug. 17, 1906, June 28, July 26, Aug. 9, 23, 30, Dec. 13, 1907, April 1, Nov. 11, 1910; "Highlights" Staff, "Transportation," HH, pp. 178, 183; Michael E. Hennessy, Twenty-Five Years of Massachusetts Politics: From Russell to McCall, 1890-1915 (Boston : Practical Politics, 1917), pp. 118, 171-172, 208, 220; Cornelius Dalton, Ed., John Wirkkala, Anne Thomas, James J. Dobbins, Illustrator, Leading the Way: A History of the Massachusetts General Court, 1629-1980 (Boston: Published by the Office of the Massachusetts Secretary of State, Michael J. Connolly, Secretary, 1984), pp. 178-179.



of the automobile age. He and Albert I. Simmons, proprietor of the town's leading meat store, were early owners of autos and joined together in 1907 to become Bridgewater's first Ford agency. Three years later, Bassett opened a Ford dealership and garage on Main Street, a short distance from its junction with Broad Street and almost across from Simmons's business. For fifty years the Bassett enterprise was a familiar site in Bridgewater; it is now occupied by a Cumberland Farm store. Except for George O. Jenkins's purchase of a Packard Motor truck in December 1910 for use in his leather board manufacturing company on Plymouth Street in Bridgewater's Prattown section, it appears that the town's manufacturing and retail outfits did not employ motorized vehicles before the end of that year.<sup>17</sup>

From 1911 to the start and intensification of the European War in 1914-1915, few folks in Bridgewater entertained serious thoughts about owning an automobile or other motorized vehicle powered by gasoline. But they certainly took note of the steady rise in the total number of cars on the town's thoroughfares and the greater choice available to the few who could afford one. One can only speculate on how many Bridgewater people traveled by car or trolley to auto shows, including the one in nearby Taunton in February of 1913 at the armory on Weir Street; among the seventeen makes of cars in this exhibit only three carried names still familiar a century later-Cadillac, Buick, and Ford.<sup>18</sup>

While automobiles in Bridgewater continued to be used mainly for recreational purposes in the five years preceding the Great War, a variety of town entrepreneurs and professionals began to see advantages in using motorized vehicles; no attempt is made in this essay to explore this topic in detail, but some examples are in order. Shortly after the opening of the Bassett garage on "the State Highway Line to the Cape that runs down Main street," a party of over ten people raved about a "trip to Nantasket and Brant Rock...in one of Bassett's trucks," with Ralph Perkins, a company's employee, "at the wheel." By 1914, W. H. Bassett's was a thriving business, boasting its appointments as "a Blue Book Garage" and as an official garage of the Automobile Owners Association. Indicative of its continuing support of automobile transportation, the Bridgewater Inn Garage in November of 1915 "purchased a car for public service on the taxicab plan," with the goal of providing "constant service of patrons at all hours of the day or night." In another first for the town, William Anderson, earlier in that year, announced his plans to launch a "motor bus line," allowing riders to reach, among other destinations, the railroad station on Broad Street, the State Farm on Summer Street, and the Jenkins mill on Plymouth Street. Under the management of F. A.

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<sup>17</sup>BI, July 24, 1903, July 8, 1904, June 8, 15, 1906, April 5, July 5, Aug. 9, Oct. 11, 1907, May 27, Dec. 2, 1910, May 5, 1911, Oct. 30, 1914, April 19, 1918; see my essays on stores and services and transportation in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 31-34, 90-92, and pp. 87-88, respectively; "Alcott, George J.--Hotel proprietor," HH, p. 255; David R. Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, pp. 19, 39; Tales Around the Common, ed. by Mann, Lord, and J. Kenneth Moore, p. 10 and also Lord, "First Quarter of the Century in Bridgewater," p. 46 in the same publication; Lewis G. Lowe & Son continued to insure automobiles until May 1, 1918, when this business was turned over to Samuel B. Cholerton; I cannot help adding that this latter company insured my cars for many years!; Richard Cross, "Bridgewater Then and Now (1867 to 1923)," BI, Feb. 22, 1924.

<sup>18</sup>BI, March 15, 1911, Jan. 19, 1912, Feb. 14, 1913, April 24, 1914; Flink, "Automobiles," p. 65; this latter source notes that in 1913 "the United States produced some 485,000 of the world total of 606,124 motor vehicles;" in a compilation supposedly based on the 1915 Massachusetts Census, automobile registration in the state went from 469 in 1910 to 2,491 in 1915; I have no figures for Bridgewater.

McNeeland, the Bridgewater Ice, Coal & Coke Co. also pioneered in the use of motorized vehicles. An interesting photograph in the *Independent* on March 15, 1912, illustrates the company's employment of this form of delivery, while not abandoning the long-standing use of horse-drawn wagons. The Prophett & Flynn funeral business also made the transition from horses to automobiles. In late May of 1911 folks in Bridgewater heard and/or read about the death of one of the black horses used by this well-known undertaking business. Four years later its purchase of a "motor funeral car" probably came as no surprise to the town's inhabitants. That some doctors in their practices had begun making house calls by automobile is illustrated by a newspaper report of February 16, 1912, describing Dr. William E. Hunt's "narrow escape from serious injury" as he motored from his home on Main Street in Bridgewater "to visit a patient" in East Bridgewater; his car was "towed to Bassett's garage for repairs." Graduates and Undergraduates of Bridgewater Normal also became aware of the growing role of motorized vehicles in medical emergencies when they contributed almost one thousand dollars toward the purchase of an ambulance in honor of Sergeant Robert E. Pellissier. He was a 1903 graduate of the school who sailed for France shortly after the start of the Great War to fight for "his Fatherland." Sadly, he "was killed in action" on August 29, 1916, at the Somme.<sup>19</sup>

Bridgewater also began to employ motor vehicles in some of the town's departments. In April 1913, for example, its police officers, carrying out their duty to maintain law and order, used an automobile "in a series of six gambling and liquor raids," resulting in four wayward citizens pleading guilty and being fined \$75 each in the Brockton Police Court. About six months later, in an episode of quite a "different nature," burglars sped away in an automobile after committing robbery at "the store of Caswell Bros., near the State Farm." The machine was shortly found and "pulled" to the town center by an auto truck recently purchased by Edwin Atkinson, proprietor of the Central Square stables; the stables had been operated by Francis D. King for many years. Any list should include the purchase of the first motorized equipment on June 28, 1915, by the newly organized Bridgewater Fire Department under the leadership of Fire Chief Frederick Waite. His long tenure extended from 1914 to 1937. Some of Louise Dickinson Rich's contemporaries would have empathized with her nostalgic account in *Innocence Under the Elms* of the replacement of "horse-drawn apparatus" by motorized fire trucks. Conceding the greater efficiency of the new method of fighting fires, she voiced the sentiment that "fires have never been as thrilling since the old town horses were put out to pasture." Housed in the central fire station on School Street, renovated four years earlier, the new combination fire truck soon "Proved its Worth." On July 13, 1915, less than two weeks after its commissioning, the new apparatus quickly arrived at the nearby Normal School and prevented a fire in its "express

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<sup>19</sup>Bridgewater Book, while no pagination is provided in parts of this publication, see pictures of Prophett's "modern funeral car," and Atkinson's auto truck; BI, March 10, 31, April 7, May 26, Aug. 18, Dec. 22, 1911, Feb. 23, March 15, 1912, April 4, May 2, 1913, Oct. 30, 1914, March 5, April 16, Nov. 26, 1915, March 3, 1916; "Hunt, William E. [M. D.] 1885-1962," HH, p. 267; Arthur Clarke Boyden, Albert Gardner Boyden and the Bridgewater State Normal School: A Memorial Volume (Bridgewater, Mass.: Arthur H. Willis, Printer, 1919), pp. 111-112; in 1916 the United States continued to maintain its neutrality in the Great War, but my readers might wish to read Boyden's concise and touching account of Pellissier's educational journey in America and his subsequent return to France; Orson Kingsley, "Robert Pellissier," Bridgewater Review, Volume. 37, Number 1, April 2018, pp. 26-31.

room” from becoming a “serious conflagration.”<sup>20</sup>

Before leaving our discussion of motorized vehicles in Bridgewater between 1911 and 1915, three other interrelated matters need to be briefly discussed, namely accidents, town and state regulations, and the availability of car insurance and service businesses. During the fiscal year of 1913-1914, over seventy thousand motor vehicles were registered in Massachusetts, including 8,000 or so commercial vehicles. How many of these were owned by Bridgewater’s 8,000 or so citizens I have yet to discover. But the increasing number of accidents within the confines of the town, as reported by the *Independent*, suggests Bridgewater, along with other small Bay State communities, was witnessing a steady increase in car use and ownership. My research of reported accidents of varying severity, which were frequently caused by speeding, clearly supports the following assertion by the *Independent* on May 31, 1915: “Simmons corner, so-called, at the junction of Main and Broad streets and Central Square, has always been recognized as a particularly dangerous place for automobiles, and that a serious accident has not yet occurred there is more a matter of good luck than the good judgment of auto drivers.” There were, of course, accidents at other locations. One happened on Pleasant Street on May 27, 1912 and was characterized as “the most serious” that had yet “occurred in town.” Labeling it a “Savage Affair,” the *Independent* reported in great detail how a first-year student at Bridgewater Normal was “terribly injured and narrowly escaped death” as she was returning to her home on Pleasant Street. The second occurred on October 3, 1913 and was surely among the earliest fatal automobile accidents in Bridgewater. Folks in the town were shocked and deeply saddened to hear and read about the death of a six-year old girl who suffered severe injuries when struck by an automobile on “Main street, near Oak street.” Several witnesses attached “no blame” to the driver of the car, who reportedly had “turned quickly to the right” ... “to avoid striking” four small boys in the street and then struck the young victim who at that moment had “stepped from the sidewalk.” An investigation by a police officer and medical examiner saw “no reason to place” the driver “under arrest....” The victim’s body “was taken to the undertaking rooms of Prophett & Flynn,” situated at this time in the southern section of the Fairbanks Building on the eastern side of Central Square. (This funeral business was moved in the 1940’s to its present location on Bedford Street, a short distance from Central Square.)<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>“Report of the Fire Department,” *Annual Town Report-1914*, pp. 59-61; *BI*, Feb. 5, 1904, Feb. 1, 1907, April 7, Sept. 1, 29, 1911, Feb. 16, March 1, May 17, 1912, June 6, July 4, Sept. 19, Nov. 1, 28, 1913, Jan. 16, March 20, June 19, Sept. 25, 1914, Jan. 29, July 2, 23, 1915, March 31, 1922, March 18, 1923; “Waite, Frederick, 1875 to 1945, -- Fire Chief,” *HH*, pp. 111-112, 279; Dickinson Rich, *Innocence Under the Elms*, pp. 118-121; see Benjamin A. Spence, “A History of the Parker-Gates-Shaw House,” p. 27; William F. Hanna, *A History of Taunton, Massachusetts* (Taunton, Massachusetts: Old Colony Historical Society, 2007) p. 328; Doris Johnson Melville, *Major Bradford’s Town: A History of Kingston, 1726-1976* (Kingston, Massachusetts: Kingston Historical Commission, 1976), p. 129; Taunton had its first motorized fire engine in 1912, Kingston in 1918; for the 1911 renovations of the School Street fire station see Spence’s account of stores and services in Bridgewater to 1910, p. 88; in 1913 E. S. Kingsley, an officer at the State Farm in Bridgewater sold his grocery store to the Caswell brothers.

<sup>21</sup>*BI*, Aug. 4, Sept. 29, Nov. 10, 1911, Feb. 16, April 5, May 10, 24, 31, June 7, 28, July 19, 26, Aug. 16, 23, Sept. 13, 27, 1912, May 2, June 13, Aug. 15, Oct. 17, 1913, Jan. 30, June 12, 26, Aug. 7, Oct. 30, Dec. 18, 1914, May 21, June 4, July 30, Dec. 31, 1915; the preceding list of dates on which the *Independent* reported motor vehicle accidents is most likely not complete, but it does show the increasing regularity of mishaps; *Census of*

As motor-vehicle travel increased during the several years before the onset of The Great War, state and local governments in Massachusetts, building upon earlier legislation of the General Court, took further steps to regulate this “new form” of transportation. Only a few examples will be noted here, but as Cornelius Dalton reminds us in *Leading the Way*: “As the years went by and the number of motor vehicles...grew tremendously,” recommendations of “numerous legislative commissions” led to the passage of many laws. “Automobilists,” claiming they were “well versed” in the 1903 law requiring all motor vehicles be equipped with lights for night driving, backed what proved to be an abortive legislative attempt in 1909 to mandate that horse-drawn wagons and carriages also meet this standard. Indicative of the growing political clout of those advocating motorized travel was evident, however, when a new law, effective July 22, 1911, required lights on non-motorized vehicles. This victory did not mean that all automobile drivers themselves obeyed the light requirement. About a year after the passage of this latest legislation, a resident of Bridgewater’s Scotland section was “seriously injured” by a motor vehicle as he crossed Pleasant Street to take “an electric car” for the town’s center. The victim was “quite positive that the automobile had no lights else he would have seen it in time to avoid the accident.” The car sped away so quickly that the occupants of a trailing car were unable to get “the number of the one” operated by the errant driver.

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In part, episodes of this kind led the state legislature in 1913 to enact, among other “constructive” measures, a law requiring “every operator of a motor vehicle, which for any reason is involved in an accident in which any person or property is injured,” to submit a report to the Massachusetts Highway Commission; violation of the law could lead to the revocation or suspension of the driver’s license. In 1914, the matter of lights continued to be addressed by the state legislature. In an effort to tighten the law on night lights, an amendment to previous legislation became effective in May of 1914. No longer were vehicles exempted from having lights in those towns and cities where street lights had been placed “500 feet or less apart.” Instead, “vehicles in every city and town and on highways” would now be required to carry lights “visible from the front and rear during the period from one hour after sunset to one hour before sunrise.” Perhaps, some Bridgewater farmers were relieved to hear that the only exemption to the new law were “vehicles used to carry hay or straw and then only when so loaded.” Two other regulations were enacted at this time, one outlawed disabling a muffler “in the thickly settled or business districts of a city or town,” the other requiring motor cycles to “carry number plates.”<sup>23</sup>

It was one thing for the General Court to pass laws regulating motor vehicles, another for small police departments such as Bridgewater’s to consistently enforce them. This was especially the case from the late spring until the late fall of every year between 1911 to 1915, as the flow of automobile traffic increased significantly. As previously mentioned, Simmons corner, at the junction of Main and Broad Street and Central Square, continued to

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Massachusetts, 1915, pp. 49, 54, 196, 326; according to this latter source Bridgewater’s total population in 1915 was 9,381, with 6,106 American-born and 3, 275 foreign-born.

<sup>22</sup>BI, Nov. 17, 1911, Aug. 23, 1912; Dalton, Leading the Way, pp. 178-179.

<sup>23</sup>BI, May 23, 1913, April 10, July 24, 1914; Hennessey, Twenty-Five Years of Massachusetts Politics, pp. 220, 334.

be the most problematic since more than a few “automobiles were speeding in all directions, regardless of speed laws or the rights of horse-drawn vehicles and people on foot.” The *Independent* labeled it “one of the worst danger spots in Plymouth county...” While the stationing of a special traffic officer at this corner, mostly on holidays and weekends, had some ameliorating effect, the Bridgewater police department in the spring of 1915, established at this junction a signal light, “so located” that it would be “seen for considerable distance from five different directions.” Not to be confused with a stop and go light system first used in the early 1920’s, this light, once activated, would not only be a warning to speeding motorists, but also alert a police officer by telephone of a potential problem. If, as reported, the “new police signals lights” proved “a big aid” to the officers, a variety of traffic violations did not end. In October, Chief of Police Swift let it be known that he would no longer simply warn drivers neglecting to use lights. Instead officers would begin to “make arrests of those who violate the law.” Responding to a long-time problem, he also indicated his intention of taking care of those bicyclists “who persists on riding on the sidewalks...” The Report of Police Department for 1915 would seem to indicate little success was achieved. Out of a total of 184 arrests, two were for violations of auto laws and one for riding a bicycle on a sidewalk.<sup>24</sup>

### **Shopping in Bridgewater**

Even a relatively brief look at Bridgewater between 1910 and 1920 would be incomplete without discussing retail outfits serving a town which saw its population increase from 7,685 to 9,381. Hopefully this account of the shopping needs and habits of the town’s citizens during this decade will serve as a sequence to my long essay dealing with this topic from the 1880’s to 1910. As had been the case since the late nineteenth century, folks in Bridgewater continued to do their shopping mainly in Central Square and parts of Main and Broad Streets, extending northwest and northeast respectively from the southern tip of the Common. The trolley system, constructed beginning in 1897, made shopping in larger communities such as Taunton and Brockton less problematic for folks in Bridgewater. It also made it easier, however, for some residents of the town’s outlying areas, including Scotland, Titicut, and the far reaches of Main Street bordering on West Bridgewater, to easily reach Central Square. Given the concentration of Bridgewater’s population in what was often call the village center, the greatest number of shoppers simply walked to their favorite stores. Some farmers in areas such as Prattown, an eastern section of Bridgewater never blessed with trolley transportation, continued to travel on horse-drawn conveyances to make a variety of purchases and conduct other business in and around Central Square. As the decade wore on, a small but growing number of townsfolk and out-of-towners began to park their motor vehicles in the environs of Central Square and then proceed to a particular retail store. While the following discussion hardly includes all of Bridgewater retailers who ran businesses at least some of the years between 1910 and 1920, I hope my selections give my readers a sense of what it was like to shop in a small town like Bridgewater during this time.

### **Hooper & Company**

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<sup>24</sup>“Report of Police Department. “Annual Town Report, 1915, pp. 75-76; BI, Oct, 6, 1911, May 24, Aug. 23, Oct. 4, 1912, May 9, 23, 1913, May 8, 22, 1914, March 19, April 16, July 16, Sept. 17, Oct. 15, 1915.

With the understanding that the configuration of retail businesses in Bridgewater was changing between 1910 and 1920, let us begin by discussing several that had become almost town “institutions,” thanks to their many years of serving the public. Located on the northwest corner of Central Square, the most prominent of them was Hooper & Company, a general or “country” store, often referred to as “Old Reliable.” It could boast an origin dating back to the eighteenth century when Col. Josiah Edson, Bridgewater’s most noted loyalist in the American Revolution, had operated a small store on this site, then in the South Parish of Old Bridgewater. Over the years this structure was enlarged, with many of its “hewn, not sawed beams” remaining in place into the twentieth century. In 1874, Avery F. Hooper and Paul O. Clark became the latest of several of proprietors, although the building continued to be owned by the Bridgewater Iron Co. until 1887, at which time it was purchased by Clark. Almost two years later the Clark-Hooper partnership was dissolved, and Hooper and his two sons Albert H. and A. Frank formed Hooper & Co. Albert took over the running of the business in the early 1900’s owing to his father’s declining health. Avery Hooper, however, continued to keep in close touch with the store’s affairs until just before his death in the fall of 1912. One would like to think that he joined his son in seeing Hooper & Co. listed as one of thirty-two stores and service businesses in a “Who is Who in Bridgewater?” contest sponsored by the *Independent* in June of that year. I suspect almost all townsfolk were able to identify the description of “Old Reliable; indeed many of them used a telephone to check on some item advertised in this newspaper.” Albert H. Hooper died on January 30, 1917, and shortly thereafter Hooper & Co. premises were occupied by Bartholomew Flynn’s Cash Grocery.)<sup>25</sup>

#### **Henry T. Burrill & Son**

Henry T. Burrill & Son, located in 1910 on Summer Street not far east from its intersection with Broad Street, was “the [second] oldest continuous mercantile business” in Bridgewater until Hooper’s went out of business in 1919. Burrill’s could also trace its past to the days when present-day Bridgewater was still the South Parish. The original structure was built by Edward Mitchell in the very early nineteenth century on a site once occupied by a blacksmith shop. In 1825, shortly after the division of Old Bridgewater into four towns, a second floor was added to this “old-fashioned” general-country store. Following several proprietors, the business in 1848 came under the control of Joshua E. Crane, a native of nearby Berkley. During the next forty years, he became a beloved citizen, merchant, and historian of his adopted town. After his death in 1888, his son Henry L. ran the business in partnership with Henry T. Burrill, who had been a clerk for the Hooper-Clark retail enterprise. Following Crane’s decision in 1902 to devote full time to his work as Bridgewater’s clerk and treasurer, Burrill became the “sole proprietor” until his son Harold “finished his education,” at which time the name of the firm was

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<sup>25</sup> BI, April 9, 23, 1887, March 16, 23, 1889, Jan. 20, 1899, Dec. 15, 1911, June 21, 28, Nov. 15, 1912, Dec. 19, 1913, April 24, 1914, Feb. 2, 1917; Bridgewater Book; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 3-5, 51-52; Spence, “Descriptions of Sites in Bridgewater,” (revised in 2003), Item 26; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p.62; the description under the top picture in the latter source was written by Dr. Benjamin A. Spence; the building housing Hooper’s business is no longer extant and the site has since seen a number of occupants, including a five and dime store and, most recently, a new section of the Bridgewater Savings Bank.

changed to H. T. Burrill & Son. A second major change for this retail store came in 1910 when it moved into part of a new Estes Building, placing this grocery's entrance a bit more to the east on Summer Street. Some of the "older families in town" continued to trade and carry charge accounts with this store during the pre-war and World War years. They were saddened to read the following caption in the *Independent* on February 6, 1920: "Old Business Sold." Ownership was passed to the Economy Public Market which immediately conducted a "Closing Out Sale" of Burrill's entire inventory, most notably its "finest high-grade stocks of fancy groceries."<sup>26</sup>

**J. H. Fairbanks  
and  
Prophett & Flynn**

Not as venerable in 1915 as the two oldest retail businesses in Bridgewater, the hardware store built and run by John H. Fairbanks had the distinction of having the same proprietor since its founding fifty years earlier. While my earlier study on stores and services in Bridgewater presents in some detail the history of this commercial endeavor up to 1910, a short review of these years might be in order. The story of Fairbank's enterprise began in 1864 when he and William Prophett purchased land owned by Josiah L. Bassett situated on the east side of Central Square next to the Town Hall which had been erected in 1843. These two rising entrepreneurial tradesmen, both born in England, proceeded to erect a "commodious" and solid Italianate wooden-framed, clapboard structure of two floors and an attic, which, along with the Town Hall, remains a well-recognized feature of the Square a century and a half later. Before Prophett's death in 1897, he and Fairbanks jointly occupied their new business block, the former using its south side for a small "variety" store and furniture and undertaking businesses; the latter the north side for a hardware store. This cordial and informal arrangement continued when Prophett's son William S. took over as director of the family's funeral business and asked John E. Flynn, a Bridgewater native with five years of experience in the undertaking business in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to join him in what had become a well-established service enterprise. While the commercial endeavors of Prophett and Fairbanks continued to occupy the 1865 structure, a significant change in their informal ownership arrangement occurred in 1907, when Fairbanks decided to incorporate his business, entitling it "J. H. Fairbanks Co."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>BI, Sept. 2, 1880, Aug. 18, Sept. 1, 1888, Feb. 7, 1902, Dec. 24, 1909, June, 17, July 1, 1910, Dec. 8, 15, 1911, June 21, 28, 1912, Jan. 3, 1913, Feb. 6, April 2, 1920, Feb. 22, 1924; Joshua E. Crane, "History of Bridgewater," Hurd's History of Plymouth County (Philadelphia: The J. W. Lewis and Co., 1884), p. 818; I sometimes used a reprint of Crane's history done by The Bridgewater Historical Collectors, 1986, ed. by James William Buckley and Katherine Pratt Jordan; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, pp. 63-64; in this latter source the description under the picture of Burrill's store was written by Benjamin A. Spence; Spence, "Descriptions of Sites in Bridgewater," Item 31; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 5-6, 52-54; HH, p. 140; "Crane, Joshua Eddy, 1823 to 1888--merchant, historian," HH, pp. 260-261; for a short overview of Hooper's and Crane-Burrill's general stores in the late nineteenth century readers would enjoy reading the unpublished memoirs of Flora Townsend Little's "A Wreath of Memories," copies of which can be found in the Bridgewater public library; I feel compelled once more to let the folks in Bridgewater know that the *Bridgewater Independent*, first published in 1877, remains the most essential primary source for anyone doing research on the town at least through the 1950's; the microfilms in the town library need to be replaced.

<sup>27</sup>BI, April 1, 1879, March 23, 1885, Dec. 22, 1888, Jan. 27, 1894, April 13, Dec. 14, 21, 1895, Dec. 10, 17,

Despite the legal division of their property, amicable relations between these two merchants continued into the second decade of the twentieth century. “Messrs. Prophett and Fairbanks,” for example, were praised by the *Independent* on May 20, 1910, for their “proposed plans” to build an “addition on the sidewalk,” allowing them to “plead guilty” of putting on a “bold front.” The luring display of items featured in the new front windows facing the eastern side of the Common probably prompted more than one passerby to make an unanticipated purchase of some hardware item or attractive piece of furniture. Diligent readers of the local weekly newspaper also were aware of the merchandise and services advertised by these two firms. How many folks succumbed to Fairbanks’s 1912 ad averring its ability to safely design and install a new bathroom, “the appearance of which is dainty and pleasing,” or the one in 1913 boasting “33 years of continuous sales of Glenwood Ranges?” How many mothers in Bridgewater read with great interest Prophett’s Furniture Store promising its “Electric Vacuum Cleaner” as “A Sure Cure for Spring Ailments,” all the while saving “trouble, time, dust and keeping the men sweet tempered.” James H. Dickinson, editor of the *Independent*, was not paid in cash for carrying Fairbanks’s ads, but rather in merchandise found in his hardware store. According to Louise Dickinson (Rich), this arrangement did not always work well for her father’s or family’s finances, since “there were a few score of things we really need, like new shoes or a couple of tons of coal” which Fairbanks did not stock.<sup>28</sup>

In 1915 John H. Fairbanks, eighty-years of age, and William S. Prophett, twenty-three years younger, could look back over the previous five years with a high degree of personal and professional satisfaction, while their country of birth was engaged in a bitter European war, with worldwide ramifications. Although not mentioned in the *Independent*’s “Who is Who in Bridgewater” list of 1912, Fairbanks’s hardware store was referred to in that newspaper’s “Shopping Suggestions” on December 19, 1913, as “another of the old reliable concerns” worthy of a visit by shoppers during the holiday season. Perhaps of greater import to its business was the following announcement appearing in the *Independent* on February 5, 1915: “J. H. Fairbanks Co. wish you to know that they have been selected as a Good Housekeeping Store, by the Good House-Keeping Magazine.” A month later, and probably more lucrative in the short term, the firm was “awarded the contract for heating and plumbing” of the building on Summer Street being erected to house the town’s third bank, the Bridgewater Trust Co. Unfortunately, Fairbanks “was taken seriously ill, that summer...and hurried to the hospital, where [an] operation took place.” One would like to think he recovered quickly and was among the “more than thousand people to attend the bank’s Open House” on August 30, 1915. Whether or not he was at this celebratory event, he might well have reminisced

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1897, Jan. 7, Feb. 18, 1898, Jan. 20, July 14, March 17, July 14, 1899, Oct. 11, 1901, April 12, 1907; Crane, History of Bridgewater, p.796; Bridgewater Book, no pagination; this latter source in one page and one picture clearly shows close relationship between the Fairbanks and Prophett commercial establishments; Townscape Institute, Form 54, pp. 174-177; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, pp.76, 80; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater, 1900-1910, pp. 6-8, 54-58; “Fairbanks, John Hassem, 1835 to 1929,--Merchant,” HH, p. 263; “William, Prophett, 1834 to 1897, Merchant, funeral director,” HH, pp. 275-276; “Prophett, William Spiers, 1858 to 1932--Funeral director, Fire Chief,” HH, p. 276.

<sup>28</sup>BI, May 20, 1910, March 24, April 14, 28, June 23, Sept. 29, Nov. 24, 1911, Jan. 5, March 15, 22, April 5, Aug. 30, Sept. 20, 1912, Jan. 3,17, 24, Feb. 7, March 7, May 9, 30, Aug. 8, 1913, April 17, June 19, Sept 4, 11, Oct. 2, Dec. 11, 1914, March 5, April 9, 1915; Dickinson Rich, Innocence Under the Elms, p.140.



about his role as one of the almost twenty incorporators and then a director of the Bridgewater Water Company, a private firm which in 1887-1888 had established a town-wide water system. Except for being occasionally confined to his house due to illnesses or physical mishaps, Fairbanks continued until his death on January 9, 1929, to walk the short distance from his home on South Street to the business block he and William Prophett had erected in 1865, the year marking the end of the American Civil War.<sup>29</sup>

Between 1910 and 1915 William S. Prophett continued to successfully operate the businesses inherited from his father William in 1897. Among other stores cited in its "Our Merchants' Christmas Edition" on December 15, 1911, the *Independent* recommended "Prophett's Furniture Store" as "a good place to make a selection for durability and use." Four years later, the recently established Bridgewater Trust Company, evidently agreeing with this sentiment, awarded Prophett's "the contract for furnishing... movable" items, such as "desks, chairs, tables," all of which were to be of "solid mahogany, finished to match the fixtures." Prophett's funeral business also flourished in these years, thanks in good measure to John E. Flynn, one of the town's prominent business and civic leaders, whose business association with Prophett's commercial endeavors dated back to the 1890's. In 1906 the professional status of the firm was further strengthened when W. P. Prophett, a graduate of the Massachusetts College of Embalming, joined his father and Flynn as a member of the team. Nine years later, these three associates could take pride in their decision "to purchase a motor funeral car," an indication that the use of horses in Bridgewater's commercial life was beginning to decline. Most likely this move was most poignant for the elder Prophett. In 1894, he had begun his five-year-tenure as the first Fire Chief of Bridgewater's publicly-owned and operated Fire Department, with its main station located on School Street just around the corner from the Prophett-Fairbanks commercial block. For the next 21 year, this public service and Prophett's private undertaking business relied on horses. In 1915, however, both joined the emerging era of motorized transportation which required the use of gasoline. I would like to think that Prophett, following the routine of his considerably older co-occupier of what is now the oldest commercial building in Bridgewater's Central Square, daily walked to his place of work from his "fine cottage house," erected on Spring Hill Avenue in 1900.<sup>30</sup>

#### **Ferguson's Shoe Store**

In addition to the four Central Square retail and/or service outfits discussed to this point, several others in 1915 could boast of serving Bridgewater's shoppers for thirty or so years. One of them was the shoe store started by Robert Ferguson in 1879 on Main Street in the Willis building, where the Bridgewater Savings Bank now stands.

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<sup>29</sup>BI, April 30, May 7, 1887, Feb. 18, 1888, June 21, 28, 1912, Dec. 19, 1913, March 6, 1914, Feb. 5, March 19, April 2, May 28, July 9, Aug. 13, Sept. 3, 1915, Jan. 18, 1918, Jan. 27, 1922, March 23, 1923, Feb. 29, 1924; Townscape Institute, Form 213, pp. 501-502; HH, p. 143; Spence, History of the Parker-Gates-Shaw House to 1925, p. 18; the Bridgewater Savings Bank was established in 1872, the Bridgewater Co-operative Bank in 1902.

<sup>30</sup>BI, May 12, 1894, Feb. 17, 1899, May 26, Dec. 15, 1911, July 4, Oct. 3, 1913, March 5, May 28, 1915, Dec. 16, 1916, Dec. 8, 1922; Bridgewater Book, p. xii; Spence, Fire Service: Bridgewater, Massachusetts, 1844-1910, pp. 12-16; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater, 1900-1910, pp. 55-56; Spence, "The Fire Department," Description of Sites in Bridgewater, Entry 32; "Flynn, John E., 1866 to 1955 Funeral Director," HH, pp. 263-264; John E. Flynn served as one of the early directors of the Bridgewater Trust Company; William Spiers Prophett passed away in 1932, but the funeral business founded by his father continues to operate in Bridgewater.

Born in Scotland in 1840, he moved with his family in 1858 to Bridgewater, and for a number of years worked as a molder for the town's well-known and prosperous Iron Works, of which his father James served as the superintendent for twenty-eight years. At the age of thirty, the young Ferguson decided to go into the retail business of selling shoes. (Unlike nearby Brockton, Bridgewater, while manufacturing a small number of shoes, was not yet mass producing them.) Increased trade necessitated Ferguson's move in the mid-1880's to more commodious quarters in the Mitchell Block (the Elwell Block between 1891 and 1910) on the eastern side of Central Square. Located just northeast of Fairbanks's, Ferguson's business flourished, with newspaper ads stressing its stock of good shoes and a modern shoe repair department. By the time of his death in 1909, his store was an important part of Central Square's retail complex, patronized by Bridgewater folks and out-of town shoppers as well. Much to their satisfaction, Ferguson's son Robert H., who had worked in the business and was already well-known as a solo cornetist and leader of the Bridgewater Band, became the establishment's new proprietor, a position he would hold well into the twentieth century. While the shoe store remained in the same location, ownership of the entire block changed in 1910 when Joseph A. Bowman became its new owner. During the 1913 Christmas season, the *Independent* described Ferguson's as "bigger, better, and busier than ever," offering a variety of quality footwear, all the while favoring "its customers with the lowest cost." Perhaps this prompted Ruth Hooper Bishop, one of the Bridgewater Historical Collectors, to observe in her *My Memories of Bridgewater, 1908-1920*: "We always bought our shoes and rubbers at Ferguson's Shoe Store, which is now Gildbert's Dancing School."<sup>31</sup>

#### **Wilcox's Drug Store**

After visiting the four stores mentioned so far, it was easy enough to cross the Common, a beautiful tree-studded area, to the western side of the Square to make an additional purchase at a drug store/pharmacy located on the first floor of the Washburn building. This extant Italianate wooden-frame structure, situated between Central Square Congregational Church and the so-called Tory House, was erected in the middle 1870's for Dr. Nahum Washburn, a "pioneer in the practice of dentistry in Southeastern, Ma." His plan was to move his practice from the historic Tory House which he had purchased as a family house in 1840 to the second floor of this new commercial block. About the time the new quarters were ready for occupation, however, his "defective vision compelled the relinquishment of his profession...." Hopefully in the years before his "sudden departure" at the age of seventy-seven on December 28, 1883, Washburn took great pride in knowing his son Nahum, an 1872 graduate of Massachusetts College of Pharmacy in Boston, had been successfully practicing his profession in a drugstore on the first floor of the new building for almost a decade; the *Independent* on April 1, 1879, praised Nahum Washburn, Jr., Druggist of Bridgewater, for signing a contract to make ink for the town's schools. But by 1888, "Washburn's old stand" was in financial trouble and in September Wilcox Brothers took over the business, "prepared to accommodate the public by prompt and efficient service...." For the next ten years, Henry A. and Nathaniel F.

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<sup>31</sup>Crane, p.796; BI, Feb. 1, 1879, Nov. 21, 1885, Feb. 28, 1888, April 27, 1889, Dec. 5, 1891, Feb. 13, 1892, June 17, 1893, Aug. 14, 1896, Dec. 21, 1889, Dec. 17, 1897, Aug. 16, 1901, June 17, 1904, Sept. 17, 24, 1909, Oct. 28, 1910, Jan. 13, 1911, March 29, June 21, 28, 1912, Dec. 19, 1913, March 13, Dec. 11, 1914, April 17, 1925; Bridgewater Book, no pagination; HH, p. 225; Bishop, *My Memories of Bridgewater, 1908-1920*, Tales Around the Common, p. 42; Spence, Descriptions of Sites in Bridgewater, Entry 25.

Wilcox were co-proprietors of the partnership, operating their business in a space of twenty by fifty feet. In 1898, this commercial endeavor came under the complete control of Nathaniel and until 1914 generally was referred to as Wilcox's Pharmacy. Until May of 1913, folks in Bridgewater had the choice of patronizing Cole's and/or Wilcox's drug stores. Their "rivalry" came to an end in May of 1914, when Nathaniel F. Wilcox closed his business.

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## **Central Square Market**

### **Simmons-Flynn**

Before the advent of the supermarket, Bridgewater folk relied on small stores for their meats, vegetables, and other groceries. Prominent among them and cited in Joshua Crane's 1884 history of the town was A. I. Simmons, also known as Central Square Market. My account of stores and services in Bridgewater to 1910 discusses the first quarter century of this very popular market, but a brief review might be helpful before continuing its story to 1920. Born in nearby Raynham, Simmons attended school there and afterwards went into the meat business. Around the age of thirty he moved to Bridgewater, where he resided with his wife Addie, nee Drake, on Union Street, which connects Main and Pleasant Streets. In 1884 he became the proprietor of a meat market, located underneath Crane's general store. From the start, Simmons's enterprise flourished by offering a great variety of meats and featuring fresh produce, such as asparagus and strawberries, sometimes sold from "carts driven through the town every day of the week." Among Bridgewater's most entrepreneurial-minded retailers of his time, Simmons in April of 1889 purchased "a desirable lot and buildings" at the junction of Main Street and Central Square from Paul O. Clark, who had bought this property two years earlier from the Bridgewater Iron Company. Moving with dispatch, Simmons removed a century-old wooden building and erected a small two-story structure for his meat business. He now owned his own store and the even older one next door, which had been occupied by Avery Hooper and Clark since 1874. Ruth Hooper Bishop in her memories of Bridgewater between 1908 and 1920 writes: "Sometimes I would have to bring home meat from A. I. Simmons Meat Market..." adding the two "stores were connected, so one wouldn't have to go outdoors again." No sooner had Simmons occupied his new quarters, then the diligence of the town's night patrol, evidently with some success, prevented "roughs" and "loafers" from congregating on the corner in front of Hooper's. Two persistent problems associated with the location of the new meat market, however, would remain well into the twentieth century: the screeching sound of the trolleys as they turned the corner from Main Street to Central Square and the speeding of automobiles, making this location the most dangerous one in Bridgewater. Nonetheless, A. I. Simmons continued to prosper between the years 1890 and 1910, offering "meat cut to order," employing six assistants, operating delivery wagons,

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<sup>32</sup>BI, April 1, 1879, Dec. 28, 1883, Jan. 4, 1884, Sept. 1, Oct. 14, Dec. 22, 1888, Oct. 12, 1889, Feb. 22, 1890, Jan. 14, July 22, Oct. 21, 28, 1893, June 9, Nov. 24, 1894, July 13, May 25, 1895, Feb. 25, 1898, Jan. 20, March 30, 1899, May 23, 1913, May 22, Aug. 7, 21, 1914, Dec. 10, 1915, June 30, 1916; Crane, pp. 793-794, 796; Townscape Institute, Form 49, pp. 161-162, Form 50, pp. 163-164; Ken Moore, "Map of 1852," "Tory House," Tales Around the Common, pp. 4 and 40; Bridgewater Book, p. V; HH, pp. 89, 224, 233; Mann, Lord and Moore, Tales Around the Common, pp. 10, 12; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 25-26, 64-66; Nahum Washburn, JR, passed away in 1893 at the age of fifty-four in Natick, Massachusetts.

maintaining an ice house on North Street, getting connected to town water, and installing a telephone in 1906, the year the company began labeling itself “The Busy Corner.” A major reorganization of the firm took place in the summer of 1904, when Bartholomew Flynn, who had been employed at the market since the early 1890’s, became Simmons’s full partner; the business officially became A. I. Simmons & Co.<sup>33</sup>

As Bridgewater’s population grew from 7,688 to 9,381 in the years between 1910 and 1915, this market continued to do well, despite a major change in ownership and proprietorship. After wishing “Everybody a Happy New Year in an ad on January 6, 1911, A. I. Simmons & Co. averred: “we can save you money by trading with us.” Patrons, anticipating their Sunday dinners, especially looked forward to the “Special Sale!! Every Friday and Saturday,” featuring a fine selection of fresh meats and poultry, as well as, an array of fresh vegetables and fruits. With Irish Catholics, the second largest part of Bridgewater’s population, abstaining from meat on Friday, it was prudent and thoughtful of the store to include a variety of fish, such as Finnan Haddie, Smoked Halibut and, of course, Cape oysters as part of the weekend offerings. It came as no surprise to many folks in Bridgewater in June of 1912 to see A. I. Simmons & Co. on the *Independents*’s list of the town’s most successful businesses. Many shoppers, on the other hand, were probably surprised later in the summer to read about Simmons’s decision to retire from the “market at the Busy Corner.” The formal “dissolution,” which was signed on September 30, read in part: “the business in future will be carried on at the old stand by Bartholomew Flynn alone, doing business as the A. I. Simmons Company;” evidently Simmons continued to own this property.<sup>34</sup>

The lives of the former partners, who had worked together for twenty years, naturally would go in different directions during the years of the Great War and the so-called “Roaring Twenties.” Only sixty at the time of his “retirement,” Simmons, nonetheless, had felt it “advisable to lighten his business responsibilities....” He and his wife Addie, while maintaining their home on Union Street, soon settled into the pleasant routine of traveling south in the winter (they would have a house built in St. Petersburg, Florida, in 1921) and in the summer overseeing a beautifully-situated rooming house on the ocean in the Brant Rock section of Marshfield, Massachusetts. Between the fall of 1912 and the early 1920’s, the A. I. Simmons & Co. retained its name, with Bartholomew Flynn as its sole proprietor. The transition appeared to go well, and in 1913 “The Busy Store on the Busy Corner” was recommended, among several other groceries, as a place to shop when planning the Christmas dinner. In early 1917, as the United States felt it increasingly difficult to maintain its policy of neutrality concerning

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<sup>33</sup>Crane, p. 796; Bridgewater Book, p. vii; BI, Feb. 15, 1879, Jan.4, Feb. 1, 29, March 21, April 4, 1884, Sept. 12, Oct. 31, Nov. 21, 1885, May 28, July 10, 1887, April 20, 27, May 4, 18, June 8, 22, Nov. 23, 1889, April 5, 1890, Feb. 28, 1891, Aug. 6, 1892, Feb. 26, 1895, Jan. 29, June 11, 1899, March 21, 1902, Jan. 10, 1903, July 1, 22, 1904, July 7, 14, 1905, April 27, Dec. 21, 1906, Dec. 20, 1907, Feb. 25, 1910; Bishop, “My Memories of Bridgewater, 1908-1910,” Lord, “First Quarter of the Century in Bridgewater,” Tales Around the Common, pp. 42, 48; Dickinson Rich, Innocence Under the Elms, pp. 16-17; “Flynn, Bartholomew, 1841 to 1895--Merchant,” HH, p. 263; Tales Around the Common, p. 10; Spence, “A. I. Simmons” Descriptions of Sites in Bridgewater, Entry 52; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 17-18, 74-77; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, pp. 68, 69; Flynn was named after his father, who also had run a grocery store.

<sup>34</sup>Massachusetts Census, 1915, p. 49; BI, Jan. 21, Feb. 25, 1910, Jan.6, 20, Feb. 24, May 5, July 7, 14, 1911, May 17, 24, June 7, 21, July 5, Sept. 20, 27, Oct. 11, Dec 6, 1912, July 11, March 21, 1913.

what we now label World War One, Flynn saw an opportunity to expand his retail business. Following the death of Albert H. Hooper and the closing of Hooper & Co in late January, Flynn decided to occupy the space of the “oldest mercantile concern in town,” a move made easier since it was connected internally to its adjacent neighbor A. I. Simmons & Co. Flynn not only continued as proprietor of Simmons but also of the new store called Flynn’s Cash Grocery; David Moore, who for many years had worked at Hooper’s, agreed to be “directly in charge” of this latest commercial endeavor to occupy the building, parts of which dated back to the late eighteenth century. Despite efforts to remain competitive by conducting “business on a cash basis,” Flynn found the expense of running both stores, which were plagued by a fire in April of 1920, “far heavier than before the war.” Both establishments closed their doors in 1922.<sup>35</sup>

### **Cole’s Drug Store**

After a stop at Simmons during the 1914 Yuletide, a shopper might have crossed over the southern end of the Common, enticed by Cole’s Drug Store’s newspaper ad “A little Hint for Christmas,” listing four types of cameras and four “Talking Machines.” Hopefully this pedestrian paid attention to the heavy traffic consisting of trolleys, motor vehicles, bicycles, and horse drawn wagons. Proprietor of one of the town’s oldest retail businesses at the start of the Great War, Orrin B. Cole was born in Carver in 1852. He moved to Kingston in the 1870’s, and in the early 1880’s became a resident of Bridgewater, where for over thirty years he operated this very successful and popular drugstore. The first sign above his establishment, located at 18 Central Square and a short walk east of the Hyland House (became Bridgewater Inn in the early 1890’s), had read *O. B. Cole’s, Apothecary*, a nomenclature changed to *Cole’s Drug Store* at least by the early 1890’s. One question that remains unanswerable to this writer has to do with the premises occupied by Cole when he opened his business in the early 1880’s. Photographs clearly show that Cole’s and its immediate next door neighbor, the Bridgewater & Boston Express Office, operated by Joseph A. Bowman, occupied a southwesterly annex to a small building with a Summer Street address. This “unpretentious frame structure is probably Bridgewater’s oldest extant office building” and was erected around 1830, initially to house the business operations of Carver, Washburn and Co., manufacturer of cotton gins. Any mid-nineteenth century history of Bridgewater would need to devote considerable space to the mercantile and professional activities of men and businesses associated with this property. On the other hand, sources consulted so far vaguely refer to the annex to the Summer Street building

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<sup>35</sup>BI, Aug. 6, 1892, May 25, 1895, Jan. 3, March 21, 1902, July 14, 1905, June 30, July 7, 1911, June 7, July 5, Sept. 20, Dec. 6, 27, 1912, March 21, April 25, June 20, 27, Aug. 22, Nov. 21, Dec. 5, June 9, July, 28, 1913, Jan. 2, July 3, Aug. 28, Nov. 20, 1914, June 25, Nov. 12, 1915, Jan. 21, 28, June 9, July 28, Dec. 22, 1916, Jan. 26, Feb. 2, 9, 23, April 27, May 4, June 29, 1917, May 10, June 28, July 12, 1918, April 11, 1919, April 30, May 7, June 25, Sept. 17, Dec. 3, 1920, Oct. 28, 1921, March 17, April 14, Sept. 1, Oct. 22, Nov. 3, 1922, Nov. 23, Dec. 21, 1923, May 23, 1924, May 22, 1925; Simmons evidently held no positions in Bridgewater’s town government, but in 1902 he was appointed a Deputy Sheriff for Plymouth County, a position he held until at least his retirement in 1912 from his meat market; the role of sheriffs and their deputies in the early history of Massachusetts receives some attention in my two essays covering law and order in Bridgewater from 1656 to the early 1820’s; Fairview was built before 1892 by Martin Swift of Bridgewater and by the early 1900’s was owned by Simmons..

being added in the late 1880's or early 1890's, several years after the establishment of Cole's and Bowman's commercial enterprises. We do know that neither of these proprietors owned the business quarters they occupied, but rather paid rent to Hosea Kingman, the town's leading lawyer in the late nineteenth century, who owned this entire piece of property from 1871 until his sudden death in 1900. On a more personal level, Cole's move to Bridgewater in the early 1880's was most probably related to the fact that his sister Carrie had married Kingman in 1866.<sup>36</sup>

During the years from 1885 to 1910, as Bridgewater's population rose from 3,836 to 7,688, Cole's Drugstore became one of the town's best known and frequented retail businesses, its only rival in this type of commercial endeavor being Wilcox's on the southwestern side of Central Square. That Crane's 1884 *History of Bridgewater* listed Cole's apothecary among the town's retail establishments so soon after its opening was an early sign of the store's future popularity among townsfolk. Several considerations contributed to Cole's initial success. Going back to the 1860's, other apothecaries had occupied space in what became the Kingman Building in the following decade. Indeed, Cole bought the business from Benjamin T. Crooker, described in the *Independent* on February 1, 1879, as a "M. D., Surgeon, and Apothecary," dealing in "prescriptions carefully compounded, homeopathic and patent medicines," and "fine toilet and fancy goods." Adding to Cole's ability to operate his store more conveniently and efficiently were his decisions to purchase the Charles Jewett place on nearby Summer Street and move his family, consisting of his wife, two sons, and father, there in 1884. In addition to "making considerable improvements" to his recently occupied residence, Cole's business acumen prompted him to make immediate upgrades in his newly acquired store, including "new show cases, half oval, nickel-plate, new shelf bottles, and a new prescription case." A short piece in the *Independent* during the 1888 Christmas season cited his "almost immeasurable variety" of "fancy and toilet articles," as well as "pocket knives" and "an excellent assortment of stationery...." In the spring of 1889, "Cole set up a new soda fountain," cited as "the most elegant and expensive one in town," promoting a feature of his business which would be long remembered by folks of all ages, including students of the nearby Normal school. This alluring aspect of what by the 1890's was generally called Cole's Drug Store prompted its proprietor to install a "large new fountain" in the middle of that decade, with one reporter averring: "certainly many young ladies will enjoy looking at themselves in the large mirror at the back of it, while drinking their favorite glass." Another vivid memory retained by many Bridgewater citizens well into the twentieth century is succinctly illustrated by the following item in the *Independent* of July 2, 1897: the "first indication that the glorious Fourth was at hand appeared Tuesday afternoon when O. B. Cole, the druggist, moved the little [red] building in which he keeps fireworks to the green [known at the Little Common] in front of his store. Wilcox Bros. were not far beyond and Wednesday saw them doing a good business at their stands."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>BI, Sept. 2, 9, 1880, March 4, April 4, 1884, Oct. 17, 1885, April 17, May 1, 1886, Nov. 9, 1889, March 21, 1893, Sept. 7, 1895, May 23, June 20, 1896, March 30, April 6, May 18, 1900, Aug. 4, 1905, Sept. 6, 1918; Crane, p.796, this 1884 publication lists O. B. Cole as an apothecary; "Cole, Orrin Bradford, 1852 to 1918,-- Pharmacist," HH, p. 259; Townscape Institute, Form 242, pp. 559-560; David R. Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, pp. 34, 65, 67; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 13-14, 37-38, 62.

<sup>37</sup>Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Population--Massachusetts, Vol. II, p. 86; Crane, pp. 796, 804;

Notwithstanding these appealing aspects of Cole's retail establishment, most townsfolk frequented his store to procure some remedy for what ailed them. Perhaps a goodly number of patrons found relief from their "Coughs and Colds" by taking a dose of "Cole's Syrup Tolu Tar and Wild Cherry"; the claim it actually "Cured these nasty winter complaints" was bit of a stretch. The changing nature of medicinal dispensation during the late nineteenth century, however, is clearly indicated by Cole's store front signs and newspaper ads. Initially considered apothecaries, both Cole and Nahum Washburn received a druggist license in 1888. A few years later, the *Independent* occasionally began referring to *Cole's Pharmacy*, a more scientific and professional nomenclature describing commercial businesses filling drug prescriptions written by medical doctors. In the summer of 1895, Chester Padelford, a "popular clerk at Cole's drugstore," became a registered pharmacist, after [passing] the examinations at the College of Pharmacy in Boston ...." Whatever townsfolk called Cole's, its popularity had steadily risen during its first fifteen years.<sup>38</sup>

Cole continued to prosper during the first decade of the twentieth century, although certainly saddened by the sudden death on March 29, 1900, of his brother-in-law Hosea Kingman, "one of the most prominent members of the State bar" and owner of the property housing Cole's Drug Store. Strategically located in the center of Bridgewater, this enterprise benefited from some demographic and economic trends already apparent at the turn of the century. While still a small town, Bridgewater's increase in population from 5,806 in 1900 to 7,688 in 1910 surely added to this drugstore's patronage. Many shoppers, including employees of McElwain's shoe factory, the town's largest employer by the early 1900's, could easily walk or take the Broad Street trolley to Central Square to make a purchase at Cole's. Students of the Normal School, boasting an enrollment of about three hundred in 1910, were less than ten minutes away from this popular drug store. For folks who for reasons of distance could not easily walk to Cole's or Wilcox's, at that time the only drug stores in Bridgewater, the creation of the trolley system beginning in 1897 allowed many shoppers to come and go from Central Square. Beginning on November 2, 1900, some of them, perhaps seeking Cole's NO. 10 to nip a cold "in the bud," were pleasantly surprised to see the store bathed in a "soft and brilliant light," resulting from acetylene gas produced by a Drake Generator, which was installed by C. M. Shaw, one of Bridgewater's leading plumbers until 1911. Cole, using the same lighting

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BI, Dec. 1, 1877, Feb. 1, 1879, Jan. 11, March 4, May 9, 1884, Sept. 5, 12, Oct. 10, 17, Dec. 5, 1885, May 29, 1886, May 2, Dec. 22, 1888, Feb. 9, 25, Nov. 9, 1889, Feb. 13, 1892, Jan. 14, Oct. 28, 1893, Sept. 29, Nov. 24, 1894, March 23, Sept. 7, Dec. 21, 1895, May 23, 1896, May 7, July 2, 1897, June 30, 1899, Aug. 7, 1914, July 20, 1923; Pictorial History, Bridgewater, Massachusetts, 1987, pp. 8, 16, 17, 1994, p.74; Mitchell, p. 146; his genealogy has Crooker being born in 1807 to a family that settled in Bridgewater's South Parish in the 1790's; Townscape Institute, Form 116, pp. 305-306; HH, p. 227; Ken Moore, "Hale Store, Benjamin Crooker Store--O. B. Cole Drug Store," Tales Around the Common, p. 38; Jordan D. Fiore, writer, David K. Wilson, photographer and book designer, Ralph Wilsack and Cheryl Colson, assistants, Bridgewater State College-As we were...as we are, 1840-1976 (Bridgewater, Massachusetts: Published by the Alumni Association of Bridgewater State College, 1976), p. 144.

<sup>38</sup>BI, May 2, 1888, Feb. 9, 1889, July 18, 1891, Feb. 13, 1892, Jan. 7, 1893, Jan. 20, Sept. 29, Nov. 24, 1894, March 23, Sept. 7, July 13, Dec. 21, 1895, May 23, 1896, July 2, 1897, June 30, 1899, Aug. 7, 1914, July 20, 1923, Feb. 22, 1924; Bridgewater Book, p. V; Pictorial Histories of Bridgewater, 1987, pp. 8, 16, 1994, pp. 8, 13; Mitchell, p. 146 (his genealogy has Crooker being born in 1807 to a family that settled in Bridgewater's South Parish in the 1790's); Townscape Institute, Form 116, pp. 305-306; HH, p. 227.

system in his new residence built in 1899 on the site of his first house on Summer Street, Cole mistakenly believed that this gas would win out in the race with electricity. Probably the most important development in promoting Cole's business in the early twentieth century was its affiliation, along with many other drug stores in the United States, with Rexall, "king of all," a company boasting its world-wide search for "extraordinary remedies." By 1910, it was the rule to see ads reading: "Orrin B. Cole, Druggist-the Rexall Store." As the start of the first decade of the new century had witnessed a death in the Cole family so did its end. In a little more than ten years after Kingman had passed away, the funeral of Hezekiah Cole, said to be Bridgewater's oldest man at almost ninety-five, was "held at the home of his son, O. B. Cole of Summer Street." <sup>39</sup>

Turning fifty-eight in 1910, Cole could look back with great satisfaction at how his small drug store, during the previous quarter of a century, had become a respected and integral part of Bridgewater's economic and social life. As its sole proprietor and owner, he had every reason to contemplate continued success of his commercial enterprise. His newspaper ads in the four or so years prior to outset of the Great War continued to go under his name with the clarification that his business was the town's Rexall Store. One such ad in the *Independent* on February 17, 1914, for example, recommended Rexall Dyspepsia Tablets as the "best remedy made for Indigestion, Dyspepsia, and all other Stomach Ills," reassuring would-be buyers that this was "sold only at the more than 7,000 Rexall Stores--the World's Greatest Drug Store." While not immune to such gastrointestinal complaints, some of Cole's patrons, including Normal students, townsfolk of all ages, and "automobile travelers" were often lured to his establishment by its delicious "every day Candy," selling at twenty-nine cents a pound. Perhaps even more enticing for many were "his famous homemade ice cream and ten cent ice cream sodas....," made possible by ice preserved from Skeetermill Pond off Plymouth Street in the eastern part of Bridgewater. In what had become a tradition, some citizens especially looked forward to seeing "the little fireworks house put out each Fourth of July...." <sup>40</sup>

As popular as Cole's was in the years just before the European War, which would engulf a good portion of the world, including the United States, this retail establishment was not without challenges. Its continued prosperity was most notably jeopardized by a changing competitive situation and two fires. While its proprietor likely noticed his business was not on the *Independent's* 1911 and 1912 lists of some of "the most successful" commercial endeavors in town, it probably caused him little angst. After all, Wilcox's, Cole's only competitor since the late 1880's, also failed to be mentioned. In May of 1913, however, with Bridgewater's population inching

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<sup>39</sup>Crane, p. 796; *BI*, Dec. 8, 1898, March 30, Oct. 12, Nov. 9, 1900, April 5, 1907, Sept. 10, 1909, Feb. 4, 1910, Feb. 10, 1911, Jan. 5, 1912, Sept. 6, 1918; *Census of Massachusetts, 1905*, Vol. 1, p. 819; Fiore, *Bridgewater State College: As we were...as we are, 1840-1976*, p. 144; Spence, *Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910*, pp. 101; Spence, *Education in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, 1900-1910*, pp. 85-86; Moore, *Images of America: Bridgewater*, p. 66; many thanks to Dave Moore for including a picture and some facts about Cole's second house in this book; the *Independent* has it being built in 1899; *Rizer Collection*, Number 505 (see my *Explanation* at the start of this essay for some background on this important pictorial source.)

<sup>40</sup>*BI*, April 7, 1911, March 22, 29, 1912, Oct. 24, Dec. 19, 1913, Jan 23, Feb. 27, June 26, Dec. 11, 1914, Sept. 6, 1918; *Bridgewater Book*, p. v; Arthur C. Lord, "First Quarter of the Century in Bridgewater," *Tales Around the Common*, p. 45; Hal Goodnough, "Bridgewater About 1910," *HH*, p. 232.



toward 8,000, a figure which included 2,000 or so inmates of the State Farm, Henry H. Dudley, who ran a drug store in nearby Brockton, opened another one in Bridgewater on the corner of Main and Broad Streets in the newly-built Virginia Block. Undoubtedly, Central Square's two older drug stores became aware of the inclusion of their newest competitor on the *Independent's* 1913 Christmas "Shopping Suggestions," for having a "good idea what people want and have a very attractive line of goods to select from." With the closing of Wilcox's in May of 1914, Bridgewater again found itself served by only two drugs stores. This soon changed, however, in August when Henry J. Carpenter, a former clerk at Wilcox's, reopened this drug store under his name. While these three pharmacies remained part of Central Square's configuration of commercial businesses into the 1940's, Henry H. Dudley passed away on April 30, 1918, and Orrin B. Cole on September 2, 1918. The locations of Cole's, which closed in 1942, and Carpenter's remained the same, but Dudley's moved to Simmons Corner in January 1924, following a devastating fire which destroyed the Virginia Block.<sup>41</sup>

In December of 1913, two blazes posed a more immediate challenge to Cole's drug store than did its competitors. About two weeks before Christmas, an employee of the Brockton Gas Light Company, which in May had opened new quarters in the Keith Block (soon to become the Virginia Block) accidentally started a fire when "adjusting a lamp" in Cole's "big corner show window," decorated with "light inflammable material." Instantly, "the whole section of the store was ablaze, and matters looked serious." Fortunately, quick-thinking clerks "rushed hand chemicals to the spot," extinguishing the fire before any of the store's "stock was seriously damaged." Evidently, the Fire Department on nearby School Street was not summoned to put out the blaze by connecting hoses to hydrants. (A private entity known as the Bridgewater Fire District had begun to install hydrants even before firefighting became a town responsibility in 1894.) About a week prior to Christmas, two items in the *Independent* ensured shoppers that Cole's remained the place to do their holiday shopping. One ad announced, "Cut Prices" on its "entire stock of Pictures," averring it was the "Headquarters for Bargains," where "5c and 10c articles are numerous." Included in the *Independent's* "Shopping Suggestions" for Christmas, was a youngster's comment that if "Cole's had burned down we wouldn't have had any Christmas." In a more serious vein, this brief fire probably reminded many town citizens of the vulnerability of Central Square's wooden structures. A major fire in the Kingman building, where Cole's was located, could have easily spread to the nearby Bridgewater Inn and on to the rest of the eastern side of Central Square, including the 1843 Town Hall.<sup>42</sup>

In what might be labeled Cole's December of "discontent," a more serious fire threatened the Kingman building ten days after the first one. The *Independent* put it succinctly: "Shortly before 10 o'clock Monday

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<sup>41</sup>BI, June 21, 28, Aug. 16, Oct. 25, 1912, May 9, 16, 23, Dec. 5, 19, 26, 1913, May 22, Aug. 7, 21, Dec. 25, 1914, May 22, Dec. 10, 1915, May 3, Sept. 6, 1918, Aug. 8, 1919, March 2, June 6, 1924, Feb. 5, 1926; Massachusetts Census, 1915, p. 49; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, pp. 68-69; two of the pictures in this last source clearly show the change in the location of Dudley's drug store.

<sup>42</sup>BI, May 16, Dec. 12, 19, 1913; Spence, Fire Service, 1844-1910; Bridgewater, Massachusetts, pp. 1, 11-13, 22; "Bridgewater Fire Department," Tales Around the Common, ed. by Mann, Lord, and Moore, pp. 19-20, 22; this last source includes that part of the 1895 Town Report dealing with the matter of making fire-fighting a town responsibility; "Fire Department," HH, pp. 58-59, 89.

forenoon smoke was seen issuing from the roof of the Kingman building owned by the heirs of the late Hosea Kingman and occupied by O. B. Cole, druggist, Bowman's express, and Dr. F. L. Warren on the first floor, and Attorney Frank E. Sweet on the second floor. Mr. Cole also has a storeroom on the second floor." Following the sounding of an alarm from box 52 in Central Square, firemen from the School Street station quickly laid several lines of hose and "poured tons of water into the building." The "cause of the fire," unlike the earlier one, was not immediately known. All the commercial businesses in this block could cite various losses, but Cole's sustained "the largest," with the destruction of its storeroom stock accounting for much of the estimated \$4,000 to \$5,000 worth of what was mostly water damage. After "temporary repairs...to the building," including the covering of holes in the roof and the replacement of broken windows, "all of the occupants... resumed business" the day after the fire. Cole's was soon advertising its Rexall remedies. Bridgewater had dodged, not for the first time, a possible catastrophic blaze. Some folks, firefighters among them, wondered if the improvements made to the town's fire-fighting service in the four years prior to the European War, which included annual additions of hydrants, cisterns, signal boxes, and fire hose footage and a major renovation of the School Street fire station, could adequately protect a center consisting of mainly abutting wooden structures. At the time of the Kingman Building blazes, the fire department was readying for the third time its recommendation that "an automobile Combination Chemical Engine and Hose Wagon" be added to its firefighting arsenal. This proposal, especially appealing to folks not in the vicinity of the School Street fire station, was finally approved by Bridgewater's voters in 1915, with the first motor apparatus being purchased on June 28<sup>th</sup>.<sup>43</sup>

#### Clark's Jewelry Store

A good portion of Bridgewater's adult population in 1915 had long been accustomed to shopping in Clark's Jewelry Store, located in the Keith Block on the western side of Central Square. Harry A. Clark, the store's proprietor, had moved to Bridgewater as a teenager from nearby Middleboro in 1874, when his father Paul O. and Avery Hooper became the latest managers of the town's oldest store. Mechanically inclined, the young Clark was apprenticed in 1880 to Edward A. Hewett "to learn the watch and clock making trade." Following Hewett's

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<sup>43</sup>BI, June 9, July 7, Sept. 1, 1911, March 1, 8, 1912, Jan. 24, March 7, 21, 1913, Jan. 2, 9, 23, Feb. 27, March 6, July 31, 1914, Jan. 29, July 2, 16, 23, Aug. 6, 1915, March 16, 23, April 6, 20, 1917; "Fire Department," Annual Town Reports, 1910, pp. 32-41, 1911, pp., 36-39, 1912, p. 43, 1913, pp. 57-59, 1914, pp. 59-61; "Report of the Town Officers," 1917, p. 15; "Waite, Frederick, 1875 to 1949--Fire Chief," HH, p. 279; "Warren Franklin, L., M. D., 1871-1941,--Physician," HH, p. 279; Spence, A History of the Parker-Gates-Shaw House to 1925: Bridgewater, Massachusetts, p. 27; "Bridgewater Fire Department," Tales Around the Common, p. 20; most likely a motorized fire engine was employed on March 21, 1917, to prevent a blaze threatening Cole's barn, part of his property on Summer Street, from turning into one of the worst conflagrations in Bridgewater's history; as it was, "the roofs of several buildings on Broad Street and Central Square...were afire at different times" and only the lack of wind prevented "a large part of the business section of the town" from being "swept away;" evidently the "fire started in the hay loft," but "its origin" was "a mystery;" one thing was sure, however, Cole's losses were very heavy, with much of his drug store's merchandize stored in the barn destroyed; about a month after the fire, John B. Ball, one of the town's leading home builders, "commenced rebuilding O. B. Cole's storehouse and barn;" while the folks of Bridgewater undoubtedly paid serious attention to what could have been a serious blow to its main commercial center, it might be worth noting that the town voters had recently agreed unanimously to support steps taken by President Woodrow Wilson, which inexorably led the United States to declare war on Germany for its recent overt challenges to America's neutrality in the great European War.

decision in 1887 to open a jewelry business in the much larger community of Brockton, Harry Clark became proprietor of the Bridgewater store. In May of the following year his premise in the Keith block was among several to be damaged by a fire which started in the post office, located for many years in a small wooden structure at the northwest end of this valuable commercial property. Thanks in part to \$1,000 worth of insurance, Clark's was back in business by July. The following ad in the *Independent* four years later succinctly described his small commercial enterprise: "H. A. Clark, Watches, Clocks, Jewelry and Optical Goods." I might add that its proprietor had also gained a reputation as a skillful engraver. Even a passerby, who might not have been able to afford some of Clark's products and services, appreciated his placement of "a new clock over the entrance to the store;" its "illuminate dial" proved especially helpful at night. Some patrons simply went to this small establishment to have watches, clocks and "eye-glasses" repaired. From 1893 to 1895, Fred N. Gasset, who later would become a leading Bridgewater jeweler and optometrist, not only was "a popular young clerk at Clark's," but also began "learning the watch-maker's trade." At the turn of the twentieth century, Clark, having been in the jewelry business for twenty years, was "one of the best-known citizens and merchants" in Bridgewater. In 1896, he, his wife and two children had "removed from Mt. Prospect Street to Pleasant Street." In either location, one suspects he frequently tipped his hat as he wended his way along the shaded routes to his "neatly and tastefully arranged" jewelry store. After the first trolleys from Taunton to Bridgewater's Central Square made their way along Pleasant Street on June 24, 1897, one can also visualize Clark boarding this new form of transportation on cold and stormy days.<sup>44</sup>

During the first decade of the twentieth century, Clark continued to operate his jewelry store which could boast the distinction of being the oldest of several small commercial businesses occupying premises in the Keith block. While one of his early ads highlighted some individual offerings such as "Rings, Pins," and "Buttons," he generally continued to inform the public of his skills as a "Watchmaker, Jeweler," and "Engraver." One wonders how many Bridgewater families purchased Clark's "Souvenir Spoons-engraved to order from PHOTOGRAPHS." Many patrons still relied on the part of his enterprise dealing with repairing "Spectacles and Eye-Glasses" and filling "opticians' prescriptions." In what appears to have been an expansion of his "OPTICAL Work," Clark announced in September of 1901 that he had "engaged the services of a Skillful Optician," and pointedly solicited the town for a "share" of this type of business. Being a desirable place to buy gifts, it was not surprising that

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<sup>44</sup>BI, Jan. 4, 1884, Oct. 16, 1886, Nov. 5, 1887, July 7, 1888, Feb. 9, 1889, Dec. 26, 1891, Oct. 28, 1893, June 15, 1894, Feb. 25, May 18, 25, Dec. 21, 1895, March 28, Dec. 18, 1896, Oct. 22, 1897, Jan. 20, Aug. 25, Nov. 3, 1899, March 17, 1905, May 2, 1913, May 30, Nov. 30, 1917, Nov. 8, 1918, Feb. 13, 1920; Crane, p. 796; Townscape Institute, Form 160, pp. 389-390, Form 164, pp. 398-399; the house at 92 Pleasant Street (opposite the southern end of Union Street) to which the Clarks moved in 1896 was owned by Mrs. J. C. Leach; during the fourteen years I owned a house at 149 Pleasant Street, I often noticed the plaque on the Leach house indicating it was erected 1852, thinking it would be a good idea to see other nineteenth-century houses follow suit; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 19-20, Transportation in Bridgewater to 1910, p. 44; "Report of the Town Officers of Bridgewater for the Year 1905," Annual Town Report, Arthur H. Willis, Printer, 1906), pp. 5-7; while Hewitt ran the jewelry shop in Brockton, he and his family continued to live in the 1879 Italianate style house still standing at 39 Pleasant Street in Bridgewater; beginning in 1905, Hewitt served as Town Clerk for many years following the tragic death of his predecessor Henry L. Crane who had held this position for the previous seventeen years.

Clark's, a small commercial outfit, hired additional help at Christmas time; a Miss Helen Fenten, for instance, assisted in this store during the holiday season of 1902. In the middle of the decade, Clark announced another service--the repairing and re-covering of umbrellas. Whether or not this new aspect of his business proved lucrative, it was in sharp contrast to a trend many decades later when shoppers would find it more convenient and cheaper to replace old articles for new ones. By 1910, Clark, having operated his particular commercial endeavor for almost twenty-five years, had earned the distinction of being the proprietor of "an old reliable place for jewelry." As was the case with other Bridgewater retailers, however, his life in the early 1900's was not limited to conducting his store. Clark and his wife raised a daughter, Amy E. who became "a teacher of arts and crafts in the employ of the United States government, and a son, Paul O., 2<sup>nd</sup> who during the Great War was in the United States aviation service. His short letter, printed in the *Independent* on May 31, 1918, thanking the Committee on Public Safety on behalf of the town for sending him a "trench mirror and case" must have pleased his father. The family attended and played an active role in Bridgewater's New Jerusalem Church, where Harry, following in the footsteps of his father, more than once found himself on a committee dealing with the church's finances. Throughout his life he remained "a student of mechanical matters" and kept abreast of "recent inventions and scientific discoveries." It would be interesting to know about Clark's interest in canoeing and other out-of-door activities."<sup>45</sup>

In early 1910 Clark turned forty-nine. Still a relatively young man, he probably contemplated running his jewelry enterprise for a number of years to come. It is hard to say to what extent he found himself in competition with his former employee Fred Gassett who, beginning in 1906, conducted a similar business in the Elwell block on the eastern side of Central Square and continued to do so when this property was purchased by Joseph A. Bowman in 1910; most likely Bridgewater's population of over 7,500 in that year enabled both jewelers to conduct profitable retail endeavors. The *Independent's* 1911 "*Merchants' Christmas* Edition" mentioned both stores, but Gassett's received a bit more coverage, especially receiving praise for "the jeweler's line displayed under a canopy of green, white and red." I have no way of gauging Clark's reaction to the *Independent's* 1912 "Who is Who" contest among successful Bridgewater retailers which did not include his business but did that of Gassett. Perhaps the town's jeweler of twenty-five years winced a bit on reading the following portion of the paper's comments about his former protégé: "If you've any eye trouble which glasses will overcome, the optician at 34 will locate it quickly at the cost of a pair of glasses." Whatever the state of rivalry between the two retailers, an interesting piece in the *Independent* on November 17, 1916, makes it clear that Clark was still running his almost thirty-year old enterprise. Displayed in his window were two "\$50..." checks "which the Jeweller' Security Alliance," boasting a membership of 6,000, was paying two Bridgewater police offices for thwarting a break-in at Clark's store; the guilty party "was sentenced to two years in the House of Correction at Plymouth." Undoubtedly referring to Clark and Gassett, the paper's account ended with the following piece of information: there "are two members of the

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<sup>45</sup>BI, Jan. 21, 1899, March 9, 1900, Feb. 22, April 5, 12, 22, Sept. 27, 1901, Dec. 26, 1902, Jan. 20, May 26, June 2, 1905, Dec. 13, 1907, May 31, Nov. 6, 1918, Feb. 13, 1920; "Names of Bridgewater Men in the War Service of the United States," Annual Town Report, 1917, p. 150; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 20, 73.

Alliance in this town, both of whom displayed the reward sign in their windows.”<sup>46</sup>

Following in the footsteps of his father, Clark, along with his fellow merchants, played a role in the town’s civic life during the second decade of the twentieth century. In August 1916, for instance, he supported the retailer’s association when the majority of its members “agreed to close their stores every Tuesday afternoon.” Reaching an agreement on closing hours had long been a contentious matter, and even on this occasion was not supported by the proprietors of grocery stores, who contended Tuesday was one of their best business days “on account of the arrangement of their delivery routes.” Responding to President Woodrow Wilson’s call in late October 1916, American communities across the country formed committees to seek contributions to the Armenian-Syrian Relief Fund. Clark served on the Bridgewater committee, as did about twenty other civic-minded citizens, including several women. I do not know how much was raised by their efforts, but it is noteworthy that the “less than two hundred Armenians” in the town had already “contributed nearly \$4,000 to their stricken country” during the previous two years. Following America’s entry into the Great War, Clark served on finance committees to plan appropriate observances for the Fourth of July, a holiday which had become more celebratory in Bridgewater beginning 1913. In June of 1917 he was part of a twelve-man finance committee to plan for the upcoming anniversary of the nation’s founding; it might be noted that Memorial Day was still the only holiday to receive financial support from public funds. Capturing the patriotic spirit motivating citizens involved in this local celebration, the *Independent* hoped events of this commemoration would “fit in with the present world war between the forces of democracy and autocracy and the great ideals enunciated by President Wilson....” Emblematic of the great expansion of the nation’s arm forces during the following year, Bridgewater’s 1918 Fourth of July celebration included, among other attractions, a “Big Military Parade.” Clark again was on the finance committee which received donations from “local people and by the sale of “tags” during the day.”<sup>47</sup>

Having been on financial committees of the New Jerusalem Church in his forties, Clark after 1910 was called upon to use his pecuniary acumen to promote Bridgewater’s economic life. From 1914 to 1920, he was the secretary-treasurer of the Bridgewater Co-operative Bank. This financial institution was established in 1902 and is still serving the town over a century later. While its banking operations were not comparable to the Bridgewater Savings Bank, which was incorporated in 1872, the Co-operative Bank has the distinction of not only being the town’s second financial institution but one with the original purpose of promoting home ownership of “the wage earner, a man of limited means.” This goal would be achieved by the “accumulating the savings of its members paid...in fixed periodical installments, and the lending of such funds so accumulated to its members.” In June of 1914, the bank’s annual report averred “the institution to be in a flourishing condition,” with real estate loans totaling \$66,550. Two weeks after this report, the bank’s directors appointed Harry A. Clark as the new “secretary and treasurer,” a position made vacant by the death of Edmund L. Sinnott. In accepting this office, Clark most

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<sup>46</sup>BI, Dec. 15, 1911, June 21, 28, 1912, Nov. 17, 1916, Feb. 13, 1920; Census of the United States, 1910, Vol. II, p. 860; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 9, 32;

<sup>47</sup>BI, July 4, 1913, Aug. 11, October 20, 1916, June 15, 1917, June 21, 1918; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 49-50.

likely mused on the roles his father Paul played in the management of the Bridgewater Savings Bank and as “one of the incorporators” of the Bridgewater Co-operative Bank. After being located in the Elwell block on the eastern side of Central Square for a very short time during the summer of 1902, the town’s second bank moved to Room 1 in Odd Fellow’s Block. By the time the younger Clark joined the management of the bank, business hours had increased to eight, almost equally divided between the day and evening, with the treasurer on hand to “sell shares and to answer questions.” Clark never served as the bank’s president, but, following in the footsteps of Frank E. Gurney, the Co-operative Bank’s first secretary-treasurer, evidently performed the essential and basic work of this financial institution during his six-year tenure. In February 1920, citizens interested in buying “Shares in the 36<sup>th</sup> Series” of the Bridgewater Co-operative Bank were urged to apply to its Treasurer H. A. Clark.<sup>48</sup>

In his late fifties as the World War was nearing its end, Clark evidently managed to maintain his busy schedule of running his jewelry business and spending at least eight hours a week fulfilling his bank duties; most likely he employed a clerk to wait on customers during the daytime hours he spent at the Co-operative Bank, still conveniently located in the Odd Fellows’ block, a few steps south of his own store. His wife, daughter, and son were doing well, but he had concerns about his aged parents, who continued to make their home on Church Street in Bridgewater. Clark’s mother Mary ‘had been an invalid for a number of years” and his father Paul “had been unable to leave his room since last May [1918] and had been confined to his bed for a month past.” About a week before the signing of the Armistice ending the Great War, the elder Clark died at home and was buried in the cemetery at North Middleboro. The death of his father, while not unexpected, greatly saddened his son, who undoubtedly reflected on how the two of them had been engaged in the commercial, banking, and civic life of Bridgewater for so many years. Mary Clark passed away in early February of 1920 at the age of 83. And then, a few days later, the town learned that pneumonia had taken the life of her son Harry. A double funeral was held at the family home, followed by interment in Bridgewater’s Mt. Prospect Cemetery. M. H. Boyajian succeeded Clark as the proprietor of the jewelry store located in the Keith Block at 17 Central Square. On June 5, 1924, perhaps to the surprise of the block’s occupants, Charles A. Jordan, the town’s well-known plumber, for “probably around \$10,000,” purchased this valuable commercial property which had been in the “Keith family “for more than 100 years.”<sup>49</sup>

### **R. J. Casey Company**

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<sup>48</sup>BI, June 13, 27, Aug. 1, 1902, May 23, 1913, Jan. 30, May 29, June 5, 19, July 3, Nov. 27, Dec. 4, 18, 1914, June 11, July 30, Dec. 17, 1915, June 16, 23, 30, Aug. 18, 1916, June 28, Dec. 6, 1918, Feb. 6, 13, 1920; “Purpose of the Co-operative Bank,” Records of the Bridgewater Co-operative Bank, Vol. One (1902-1920), p. 2; thanks to David R. Wolohojian for allowing me access to the bank’s unpublished annual reports; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 49-50, History of Parker-Gates-Shaw House to 1925, pp. 31-34; this last source might be consulted about the establishment and early years of the Bridgewater Co-operative Bank; HH, pp. 182, 225, 227, 250; Bridgewater Book; some young scholar interested in economic history might wish to explore the growth of banking in Bridgewater between 1872 and 1920.

<sup>49</sup>BI, June 21, 28, 1912, Nov. 8, 1918, February 13, 20, 1920, March 4, May 5, 1922, June 6, 1924; Bridgewater Book; Cholerton, Samuel B., 1879 to 1953--Businessman,” HH, p. 258; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910, p.101.

Among the most frequented commercial enterprises in Bridgewater in the years between 1910 and 1920 were several that could trace their origins to the 1890's. One of the most popular was founded in August of 1897 by Richard J. Casey, a thirty-two-year-old Bridgewater native of Irish descent, known since the 1880's as one of the town's best barbers. Located in the new Calvin Estes building in 1910 on Broad Street not far from its junction with Summer Street, R. J. Casey's was the place to go for cooling drinks at the soda fountain, newspapers, relaxing visits to the ice cream parlor, a variety of candy, chewing tobacco, pipes, good cigars, and other items. Some folks simply waited in Casey's waiting room to take the shuttle electric car down Broad Street to make the trolley connection to East Bridgewater and beyond or to the depot to catch the train to Boston.<sup>50</sup>

Well-established by 1910, Casey's relatively small store would witness important changes in the second decade of the century. Of greatest import was its physical enlargement to twice its original size. In May of 1910, it was announced that R. J. Casey's and H. T. Burrill's "country store" were to become the two main occupants of a new Estes Block to be erected on the corner of Broad and Summer Streets. This building project proposed extending Casey's premises to the east of this corner, made possible by moving those of Burrill even further in that direction. In December these retail outfits were "ready for business... in the new block," the *Independent* declaring "their occupation being the beginning of a new year in Bridgewater merchandising." A month later, this local newspaper averred, perhaps in a bit of an overstatement, "there is no question but what the new store [Casey's] is as good as anything of its kind this side of Boston." Around the time the new quarters were being readied, many townsfolk, especially those with a sweet tooth, became aware that Casey's, which had sold candy since its beginning thirteen years earlier, was now in the business of manufacturing confectionery products. Its Candy Kitchen boasted of turning out 9,400 pounds in its first three months of operation. Louise Dickinson Rich, writing many years later in *Innocence Under the Elms*, remembered consuming "the nut fudge marshmallow special, covered with chocolate shot and topped by a maraschino cherry." (Some things never change!) Other patrons were more enticed by the Prima Donna "Nu Chu," a strawberry flavored kiss, "made fresh every day" at Casey's. In the summer of 1910, this company, much to the delight of children, increased its ice cream business by having a wagon making "daily trips to all parts of the town." Just in time for the 1913 July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration, Casey's establishment boasted a new outdoor sign, reportedly the biggest one yet displayed in Bridgewater. By 1915, as the United States continued trying to avoid being drawn into the Great War, Richard J. Casey was already recognized as one of Bridgewater's leading businessmen and participant in the town's civic life, including his important role in the creation of the town's chapter of the Knights of Columbus. Despite the death of his brother Thomas in 1915, who for many years had been employed at the store, Casey remained its sole proprietor until his death in 1922, at which time his son Bartholomew took over the business.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>For greater detail on Casey's first twelve years readers might wish to see my work on stores and services in Bridgewater to 1910, pages 15-17, 77-79; Ruth Hooper Bishop, "My Memories of Bridgewater," Tales Around the Common, p. 41.

<sup>51</sup>BI, Feb. 11, May 6, 20, July 15, 29, Oct. 7, Dec. 16, 1910, Feb. 17, 1911, July 12, Sept. 13, 1912, July 4, 1913, Sept. 3, 1915, Sept. 15, 22, Oct. 13, 1922; Dickinson Rich, *Innocence Under the Elms*, pp. 31-32; "Richard J. Casey & Co.," Bridgewater Book, no pagination; the picture in this last source clearly shows the location of

**Bridgewater's Fruit Stores**  
**(Emphasis on Balboni's and Central Square Fruit Stores)**

While Bridgewater no longer has what we might label fruit stores, this was not the case a century ago. Before discussing several small establishments specializing in this commercial endeavor between 1910 and the early 1920's, it might be helpful to review the emergence of this type of retailing activity which I briefly presented in my account of Bridgewater's stores and services to 1910.

Cited in the "*History Highlights*" as being the "first Italian to settle in Bridgewater," Lawrence Costa at various times between the 1890's and 1912 conducted small fruit stands at different times on Broad Street and Central Square. That his first location was on Broad Street is supported by the following newspaper announcement of August 3, 1895: "The windows of Williams & Mayo's market and Costa's fruit store have been lettered this week." (The first of these businesses was often referred to as the Broad Street Market and was taken over by B. A. Leonard in January of 1903). In March of 1898, however, Costa moved to the Nye Block (formerly the Cushman Block), located between the Tory House and the Masonic building on the western side of Central Square. His ads in the *Independent* on March 4 and June 1, 1900, were highlighted by the words **Fruit Store** and assured patrons that his products were "received daily." Like other proprietors of small specialty businesses, including the ice cream parlor run by Charles Hayes on the eastern side of Central Square beginning in 1901, Costa knew his fruit offerings alone would not assure his store's survival. Throughout his early years as part of Bridgewater's commercial configuration, his ads also mentioned "cigars, oysters" and "a choice line of Confectionery." One wonders how many folk took note of the following Costa's ad of May 10, 1901: "Oysters! Opened Fresh Daily. Served in any style. I make an Oyster Stew that's simply delicious. Try one." Quite likely a goodly number of "lovers of Candy," catching a trolley on the western side of Central Square, sweetened their day by making a quick visit to Costa's; beginning in 1897, Bridgewater became blessed by an expanding system of electric cars connecting the town to such places as Brockton, Taunton, and New Bedford. In March of 1905, Costa moved his business back to Broad Street, occupying a store formerly used briefly by Clarence L. Keith as a "furniture repairing business." Costa continued to run this Broad Street "fruit-stand" until the late spring of 1912, but a major change in his commercial endeavor was about to take place.<sup>52</sup>

In an "Announcement" of June 7, 1912, Costas, Ligouras & Co. informed the Bridgewater public of its

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Casey's in the new Estes Building, ready for occupation in late 1910; "Casey, Richard J., 1865-1922,-- Merchant," *HH*, p. 258.

<sup>52</sup>*BI*, Aug. 3, Nov. 16, Dec. 21, 1895, March 11, Aug. 5, Oct. 28, 1898, Jan. 20, 1899, March 4, June 1, July 20, 1900, May 10, 1901, April 29, October 28, 1904, March 10, June 2, 1905, Nov. 23, 1906, Jan. 11, 1907, March 25, 1976; *HH*, p. 229; "Central Square of Bridgewater," *Atlas of Plymouth County* (L. J. Richards and Co., 1903); Spence, *Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910*, pp. 24, 27-28; Albert J. Elwell, who owned a good portion of the eastern side of Central Square, purchased the Nye Block on July 19, 1900; tracing the history of the occupancy of this block until it was torn down in March of 1976 would tell a great deal about the history of Bridgewater.



intention to open a fruit store within a week “Next to [the] Post Office,” placing it between the Bank Building and Hooper’s general store in the northwest corner of Central Square. When this new business opened on June 21, however, Costa’s name was not included in the company’s name which was now cited as Ligouras & Co. This nomenclature was used for several months, with the store also becoming known as the Central Square Fruit Store. Then in early November, it was announced that this business was “now under new management.” While I am not sure of Ligouras’s immediate successor, it appears that John Chrisimos began his nine-year tenure as the proprietor of this popular market in the fall of 1913. Before looking at his role in the commercial life of Central Square, however, we need to discuss Balboni’s, which at this point had become Bridgewater’s oldest fruit store.<sup>53</sup>

In 1897, Joseph Balboni and his brother, who jointly owned a store in Haverhill, Massachusetts, heard from a “wholesaler in Merchant Row, Boston,” about a “store for sale in Bridgewater.” Presumably after the brothers consulted with one another, Joseph, who was in his middle thirties, decided to leave Haverhill and move to Bridgewater where he became the sole proprietor of a fruit stand on Broad Street. Not many Italians had yet made this small town their permanent residence, especially compared to the Irish, the second largest component of its population; a number of Italian workers, however, found temporary lodging in Bridgewater beginning in the late 1890’s as they laid the rails of the new trolley system. Undoubtedly, Balboni was aware of this new transportation system and that some of his fruit offerings would arrive from Boston at the fairly new railroad depot on Broad Street, a short walk northeast of his store. Most likely he knew about the start of several building projects in 1897, including additions to the Academy building (home of the public high school since 1875) and St. Thomas Aquinas Church, Bridgewater’s sole Catholic and largest parish, where the Balboni family would worship. As a new participant in the town’s commercial life, he surely was interested in new constructions in Bridgewater’s center, most notably Odd Fellows building on the western side of Central Square and the new Calvin Estes Block, located a few steps from the corner of Broad and Summer Street. In their own ways, Casey, by renting the first floor of this wooden structure, and Balboni’s, located a short walk northeast on Broad Street, contributed to the growing commercialization of this important thoroughfare.<sup>54</sup>

Joseph and his wife Teresa, along with their first child Eva, who was born in Haverhill, soon found themselves settled in Bridgewater. The Balbonis first lived on Broad Street, allowing the town’s latest business proprietor easy access to his fruit store. In the first decade or so of the new century, the Balboni family grew to

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<sup>53</sup>BI, June 7, 21, July 12, 26, Aug. 2, 16, 30, Sept. 6, 1912, Nov, 7, 14, 1913; Tales Around the Common: Bridgewater, Massachusetts, p. 10; Pictorial History: Bridgewater, Massachusetts, 1994, p. 28; Costa passed away in 1921 and was buried in the Roman Catholic Cemetery on Center Street in Bridgewater; he must have been proud to see his son Lawrence serve in the Great War; subsequently he and his wife Ada were active members in the early years of the Bridgewater Post of the American Legion and its Women’s Auxiliary respectively.

<sup>54</sup>Census of Massachusetts, 1905, Vol. I. p. 335; BI, July 2, Oct. 22, 1897, July 29, 1910; Tales Around the Common, pp. 10, 12, 31, 33; Benjamin A. Spence, “Balboni’s Fruit Store,” (number 56 of site descriptions submitted in April-May, 2003, to the Bridgewater Historical Commission chaired by David R. Moore; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910,” pp. 27-28, Transportation in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 25-26, Education in Bridgewater to 1910, p. 13, Churches in Bridgewater to 1910, p. 20; Maurice K. Walsh, “Bridgewater Academy,” HH, p. 113.

nine with the addition of six children, “Charlie, Louisa, Albina, Louis, Marion and Fred,” and was most likely the reason for the family moving to Spring Street which still connects Broad and Plymouth Streets. Having acquired the skills and experiences of conducting a fruit store, Balboni evidently was able to provide for his growing family from the start. His early ads in the *Independent* simply enumerated his offerings, including locally grown fruits such as apples, tomatoes, and strawberries and imported ones, such as bananas, figs, pineapples and coconuts, starting to become components of the ordinary American’s diet in the late nineteenth century. To help ensure his year-round business, Balboni understood the need to carry more than a broad selection of fruits. Patrons, by either walking or taking the trolley shuttle on their way to work at factories along the railroad tracks, undoubtedly made stops to pick up some candy, peanuts, nuts, tonic, cigars and tobacco. Just after the turn of the century, Balboni evidently took the legal step of forming “The Bridgewater Fruit Company,” but shoppers continued to refer to the business as “J. Balboni’s Fruit Store” or simply Balboni’s. Despite small exterior fires in 1901 and 1902 which resulted in hardly any damage, and a broken window in 1901 caused by a “strong wind,” this fruit stand on Broad Street increased its patronage, as Bridgewater’s population increased from 5806 in 1900 to 7688 in 1910.<sup>55</sup>

From 1910 well into the 1920’s, J. Balboni’s Fruit Store continued to thrive at its 21 Broad Street location. Its proprietor must have been pleased to see his specialty shop cited among thirty-two of Bridgewater’s “most successful business houses” in a “Who Is Who” contest conducted by the *Independent* in the summer of 1912. After praising Balboni’s for carrying “fruits of all kinds from the home and the foreign markets of the best,” readers were reminded of other offerings, including Hazen Oxford Chocolates and, especially, “Imported Olive Oil.” Some of the store’s ads included a telephone number. At least one contemporary source appears to suggest this commercial business employed a delivery wagon. Balboni also advertised products, such “Nuts and Figs” in the Bridgewater Normal School publications, including the 1917 annual yearbook. In 1919, he informed shoppers of his stock of California Naval Oranges, which were priced at “28c a dozen.” Ah, those were the days! On the evening of August 23, 1920, twenty-three years after arriving in Bridgewater, “Mr. and Mrs. Balboni observed their 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary at their home on 38 Spring street,” where guests from “Boston, Brockton, Haverhill, and Middleboro” joined the family in celebrating this milestone. In citing this event four days later, the *Independent*’s brief item concluded with the following statement:” Mr. Balboni has conducted a fruit business very successfully” and “is not only the oldest fruit dealer in town, but is a veteran among the merchants, as most of them are late comers on the stage than he.”<sup>56</sup>

As Bridgewater’s population rose from about 8,500 in 1920 to almost 10,000 in 1925, making it once

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<sup>55</sup>BI, June 7, 14, 21, Aug. 30, Sept. 27, Oct. 25, 1901, June 27, 1902, May 29, 1903, Aug.12, 1904, July 8, Nov. 25, 1910; Tales Around the Common, p.12; United States Census, 1910: Population--Massachusetts, Vol. II, p. 860; Census of Massachusetts, 1905: General Statistics, Vol. II, p. 335; this latter census indicates that Bridgewater’s Italian population had reached 129, not a great number but the largest increase among inhabitants with Southern and Southeastern European backgrounds;

<sup>56</sup>BI, June 21, 28, 1912, Feb. 14, 21, March 7, May 2, 1919, Aug. 27, 1920; Lord, “First Quarter of the Century in Bridgewater,” Tales Around the Common, p.48; 1917 Yearbook of Bridgewater (Massachusetts) Normal School.

again the largest town in Plymouth County, Balboni's continued to offer mainly "Seasonal Fruits' of all kinds and "Confectionery and Tobaccos." There was one interesting addition. In the early 1920's, some of Balboni's ads began to remind patrons of the store's "Fine Line of Volstead Drinks." Since the Eighteenth Amendment in 1919 had prohibited the "manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors" and was put in force by the Volstead Act of the following year, Balboni, who knew Bridgewater had long been a "dry" town, was perhaps reminding his patrons of alternative ways of quenching their thirst; I do not know if his sale of sodas or fruit drinks increased. In the spring of 1925 two other changes in Balboni's ads are worth noting-the the return to labeling his business as the J. Balboni Company and the listing of "smokes" as one of his offerings; the latter might indicate he had joined other stores in selling cigarettes. Three years later the Town of Bridgewater read or heard of the passing of Joseph Balboni at the age of sixty-five. Undoubtedly his patrons, some of whom had relied on his fruits of all seasons since the late 1890's, surely felt the loss. He was laid to rest in Mount Prospect Cemetery, a burial ground established in 1842 on a street of the same name located a short distance west of Bridgewater's shopping center. Forty-two later, his wife Teresa and his first child Eva would be buried in the same cemetery lot. (Additional research might reveal what happened to Bridgewater's oldest fruit stand following its proprietor's death. Certainly, a family history of the Bridgewater Balbonis from 1897 to present would be a worthwhile undertaking.)<sup>57</sup>

From the fall of 1913 to the summer of 1922, Balboni's fruit stand's main competitor was The Central Square Fruit Store under the proprietorship of John (sometimes called Johnny) Chrisimos. A tombstone in the Mayflower Hill Cemetery in Taunton, Massachusetts, lends credence to his being born in that community in 1882 and laid to rest there in 1959. Whether he had been affiliated with Costas. Ligouras & Co. (see page 41) which had formed this new fruit company in 1912, Chrisimos's fruit stand, until 1918, abutted the Bridgewater post office which had occupied the ground floor of the Bridgewater Saving Bank building since the early 1890's. His business, along with Hooper's general store, the meat market of A. I. Simmons's Company, and several other small enterprises occupied this desirable commercial property on the corner of Main Street and Central Square. Some diligent young scholar might wish to write a thorough business history of this "busy corner." Pertinent to our account is that Paul O. Clark, who purchased the property from the Bridgewater Iron Company in 1888, sold it to Simmons in 1889. He then proceeded to remove a wooden building on the corner and erected a small two-story structure to house his meat business. Equally important to our discussion of Chrisimos is that his premise continued to be owned by Simmons, who continued to own this block long after he sold the meat business to his long-time partner Bartholomew Flynn in 1912.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>BI, Sept. 15, Dec. 8, 1922, April 13, 1923, Jan. 9, May 8, 15, Sept., 1925; United States Census, 1940; <https://billiongraves.com/grave/joseph-balboni/11459414>; Norman H. Clark, "Prohibition and Temperance," The Reader's Guide to American History, edited by Eric Foner and John A. Garraty (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), pp. 872-873; hopefully some young scholar might look at the topics of temperance and prohibition in Bridgewater between the late 1890's and 1920's; if so, I would share my many clippings from the *Independent*.

<sup>58</sup>John C. Chrisimos, 1882-1959, Mayflower Hill Cemetery, Taunton, Massachusetts; BI, April 20, 27, 1889, Sept. 27, Oct. 11, 1912, Jan. 26, 1917, April 30, 1920; for a fuller account of the history of the property on the corner of Main Street and Central Square in Bridgewater see Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to

A snapshot in *The Bridgewater Book: Illustrated*, taken a few years after Chrisimos and his wife took up residence on Main Street, shows the new proprietor, most likely in his thirties, standing in the center of his small store, surrounded by his offerings, including bunches of bananas and boxes of other fruits. A sign at the back of the store read “No Loafing Allowed,” perhaps reminding some town residences that there had been a history of young men, sometimes called “the roughs,” congregating in front of Hooper’s and Simmons’s. During the first four years under Chrisimos’s management, the town’s newest fruit stand carried many of the same items featured by its older rival. The ads of the Central Square Fruit Store became more elaborate, however, than those of Balboni’s, which had always been short and to the point. On December 15, 1916, for example, after citing J. Chrisimos as the proprietor and including a telephone number, this store’s weekly ad concluded with the following statement: “We receive daily from Boston’s leading fruit wholesalers the very best the markets offer. We, in turn, offer none but the best, and at prices that are lower in many cases than you would pay for fruit of less choice.” The ad went on to cite “Christmas Candy in bulk or boxes” and the “very best brands of Cigars and Tobacco in holiday boxes.” In what appears to be a broadening of the store’s offerings, this ad also informed the shopping public that it could now purchase “Cut Flowers and Potted Plants” at the Central Square Fruit Store. In the Easter season of 1917, as it was becoming more apparent that the United States was about to enter the Great War, proprietor Chrisimos informed shoppers that “a shipment of 300 plants” of Easter lilies, all “with two to five blossoms” would be arriving within days at his store. While aware of local competition, especially from the Bridgewater Flower Shop which had opened in early October of 1913 in the new Keith Block (soon to be called the Virginia Building) on Broad Street, Chrisimos, a strong supporter of shopping in one’s own community, asserted it “will be no object to you to buy anywhere else than in Bridgewater.” (A personal note--having sung in church choirs for over seventy years, Easter services for me would not be the same without the array of Easter Lilies.)<sup>59</sup>

Chrisimos’s last five years, 1917-1922, as part of the commercial configuration of Bridgewater’s Central Square, endeavored to stay in business mainly by expanding its space and broadening its offerings. His efforts were first reported by the *Independent* in the following one sentence on June 8, 1917: “John Chrisimos had enlarged his store and is planning an ice cream parlor.” Perhaps he had taken note that the town’s leading such establishments, Hayes’s, Cole’s, and Casey’s, were on the eastern side of the town’s center. During the following year, while he continued to let shoppers know his store was “The Place to Buy Fruit,” some ads highlighted his “Candy Counter,” while others were dominated by the headline “Place to Buy Ice Cream and Soda.”<sup>60</sup>

In an announcement in late August of 1918, the public read or heard that Chrisimos had more ambitious plans for his business. The *Independent*’s report on this matter began with praising the young proprietor’s decision as follows: “War conditions are not discouraging to at least one local merchant for he has embarked on plans to

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1910, pp. 17-18, 74-77; Moore, *Images of America: Bridgewater*, p. 62; the description under the top picture in this latter source was contributed by Spence; *Tales Around the Common*, p. 10.

<sup>59</sup>*BI*, June 7, 21, Oct. 11, Nov. 8, 1912, Sept. 27, Oct. 3, 10, Dec. 19, 1913, Jan. 16, Feb. 6, Dec. 18, 1914, Nov. 3, Dec. 15, 1916, March 30, April 6, 1917; “Central Square Fruit Store,” *Bridgewater Book: Tales Around the Common*, p. 10.

<sup>60</sup>June 8, Sept. 14, 1917, May 3, July 26, Aug. 23, 1918.

give Bridgewater the best store of its kind yet fitted up in town.” Chrisimos’s first legal step was to “secure a lease of the quarters long occupied by the A. I. Simmons’s meat market at the corner of Central Square and Main Street...” Prior to signing this rental agreement with Simmons, it seems plausible that Flynn had indicated he would be willing to move his Cash Grocery from the quarters once occupied by I. A. Simmons meat market to those vacated by Hooper’s after the death of its last proprietor Albert Hooper in late January of 1917. It is difficult to measure the extent to which folks in Bridgewater shared the *Independent’s* enthusiasm for the proposed commercial changes in the Simmons block. Many townsfolk were probably more concerned with the well-being of their young men, some of whom had become part of the U. S. First Army under General Jack Pershing, a force that would join the Allied armies in the final efforts to defeat the Central Power in the most horrific war the world had ever experienced. Many men between 18 and 21 and 31 and 45, and their families, some of whom patronized Chrisimos’s probably were thinking more about draft Registration Day set for September 12 than the proprietor’s plans to enlarge and relocate his business. It might well be that Chrisimos himself, who turned 36 in 1918, registered for the draft on the September day. (Interestingly enough his younger brother George “went to Camp” in May of that year even though he could have claimed exemption “as an alien.” His name is among 332 men and one woman listed on the War Memorial erected on the southern end of the Bridgewater Common.<sup>61</sup>

In any event, it was not until the end of October that “fitting up the store on Simmons’s corner” began. The delay in getting the renovations started, I suspect, had something to do with the arrival of a deadly influenza epidemic which beginning in September not only struck Bridgewater but also its neighboring communities. I cannot say if Chrisimos’s “hopes to be in for the Thanksgiving trade” materialized. But by early 1919, the optimistic nature of his ads seemed to confirm that he was indeed in his new quarters, which I suspect did not house the promised “16-foot soda fountain.” To entice folks to visit his new premises, his early ads included the following boast: “Do you realize that this is THE STORE in town in its varied assortment of the leading brands of the most popular manufacturers. A complete range of prices. Look over the display. Be convinced.” By the fall of that year, as many residents of Bridgewater were following a number of important news stories, including the stroke suffered by President Woodrow Wilson, the Boston police strike, the so-called Red Scare, the debate over whether or not the United States should join the League of Nation, and the high cost of living (HCL), proprietor Chrisimos was citing his commercial business as the “Quality Store.” The week before Christmas, he assured his

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<sup>61</sup>BI, Jan. 26, Feb. 2, 1917, May 17, Aug. 30, Sept. 6, 1918; R. G. Grant, Smithsonian World War I: The Definitive Visual History, p. 276; “Report of Committee on War Memorial,” Annual Town Report, 1921, pp. 134-146.

patrons that despite the “scarcity of sugar” the store by placing orders early would meet the demand for “ribbon candy.” At the same time, he cited the store’s large assortment of fruits, nuts, ice cream, cigars, cigarettes, and chocolates. As 1920 approached, the Central Square Fruit was doing well and most likely planned to be part of commercial life of Bridgewater’s Central Square for years to come.<sup>62</sup>

Whether or not Christimos took advantage of a 1917 state law making New Years an official holiday, his first ad of 1920 appeared in the *Independent* on January 2. He assured his patrons of getting the best value for their money when buying “Fruit, Candy, Cigars Tobacco” and the purest ice cream in town at his “*Quality Store*.” Four months later, folks in town watched or read about “a bad fire” in the Simmons block,” which might have completely destroyed this wooden complex, a good part of which was “over 100 years old” and before the late 1880’s had been used as a business office by the Bridgewater Iron Company. Luckily for the owner of the property and the occupying commercial businesses, a “new motor pump and motor ladder,” which had arrived at the School Street fire station only a few days earlier, was soon at the fire scene. In “15 minutes the blaze, which started on the block’s roof, was under control and within an hour ...the all-out was sounded.” Compared to other interests impacted by the fire, especially those of Simmons and Bart Flynn’s Cash Grocery, which was “temporarily” put “out of business” by smoke and water damage, Chrisimos sustained only a loss of about “150.” A photograph taken from a third-floor apartment in the Virginia Block shows Chrisimos’s sign advertising Jersey Ice Cream store survived. Nonetheless, the fire reminded him and, indeed most townsfolk, of how Central Square with its mostly wooden structures continued to remain extremely vulnerable to the ravages of fire.<sup>63</sup>

During the months following the fire, Chrisimos’s business seemed to be in good shape, as Simmons’s insurance money of \$10,000 seemed adequate to repair the damages sustained by his corner property. That Mrs. Chrisimos spent a week in July vacationing at Fairview, the Simmons’s beautifully-situated rooming house on the oceanfront in the Brant Rock section of Marshfield, Massachusetts, suggests that her husband and the owner of the property located on Bridgewater’s “busiest corner” had cordial relations. In early August, Chrisimos was glad to hear that his business, along with those of R. J Casey, Walter King, and Charles Hayes had been granted licences to sell “sodas, ice cream, confectionery and fruit on the Lord’s day.” The town’s selectmen took this action after hearing complaints about “outlying storekeepers... doing business on Sunday” without seeking permission. During the rest of year, Christimos continued to advertise JERSEY ICE CREAM, urging his patrons to “Dip your spoon into this creamy of frozen deliciousness--rich Vermont cream, choicest sugars true, fruit flavoring.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>BI, Sept. 27, Oct. 25, 1918, Feb. 21, March 21, Sept. 19, Dec. 19, 29, 1919; “Report of the Board of Health,” *Annual Town Report, 1918*, pp. 125-126; Arthur M. Schlesinger, JR., *The Almanac of American History-Revised and Updated Edition* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1993), p. 437.

<sup>63</sup>BI, Dec. 28, 1917, Jan. 2, Feb. 6, 13, 20, March 26, April 2, 23, 30, May 1, 1920; David R. Moore, *Images of America: Bridgewater*, p. 69; more than once Moore’s pictorial history of Bridgewater has been extremely helpful to my research; the Jersey Ice Cream Company was located in Lawrence, Massachusetts, which boasted of its “modern plant equipped to preserve purity and wholesomeness;” at this point I need to do more research on how this ice cream was kept frozen on its way to retailers, including Chrisimos’s Central Square Fruit Store in Bridgewater; I suspect trucks equipped with mechanical refrigeration were used.

<sup>64</sup>BI, July 9, Aug. 6, Sept. 3, 1920.

At the beginning of 1921, Chrisimos most likely did not have the same optimism for his business he had voiced a year earlier. While his store suffered little physical damage in the fire of the previous spring, his sales most likely slowed as the country's economy began to decline in the summer of 1920 and much more so a few months later when the United States "was gripped by a severe economic depression." Unlike his neighbor Flynn, whose Cash Grocery Store was forced to close "temporarily," Chrisimos was reopened almost immediately after the fire. Both continued to have financial problems and undoubtedly had agreed with the *Independent's* following assessment on December 31, 1920, of how Bridgewater retailers fared in the recent Christmas shopping: "Though the holiday business did not start early with the merchants, they had a good trade last week. The buying was of the useful order more generally than has been the case for several years back. Money was not so plentiful as in the days when everybody was working and getting big pay." Both retailers remained open during the 1921 depression, but could concur with one local reporter's analysis that "the expense of conducting a store are far heavier than before the war and the profits are no more and in some cases less, while the expense of running a truck, personally conducted, are far less in proportion." The last part of this analysis refers to Flynn's decision in July 1922 "to supplying his customers by motor truck." While Flynn did not officially close his store until two months later, Chrisimos evidently found his business more and more tenuous. As had long been the case with Hooper's general store and Simmons's meat market, Flynn's and Chrisimos's premises were connected by a mutual inside door, allowing them to cut down expenses by sharing, when necessary, each other's sales clerks. It could also be that Chrisimos was feeling the competition from C. Chronis's fruit store and market established a year earlier in what had been the old bowling alley on Broad Street. Whatever combination of factors prompted John Chrisimos's decision to give up the nine-years proprietorship of The Central Square Fruit Store, folks in Bridgewater, I suspect, were not surprised to hear that his confectionary and ice cream business had been purchased on July 21, 1922, in auction by Sullivan & Cole of Sharon, Massachusetts, a business partnership which was already operating a "chain of stores of like nature." The successor of Chrisimos, however, only had a six-month stay in Bridgewater, initially selling Hooker's Delicious Home-Made Cream Cream, but little in the way of fruit if the ads in the *Independent* are consulted. Evidently, the sale of homemade bread, pastry, and "Bake Beans and Brown Bread every Saturday afternoon at 4 o'clock" was not enough to keep Central Square's latest commercial endeavor stay in business. It would be interesting to know of Chrisimos's reaction to the latest change in the commercial configuration of Bridgewater's Central Square. But within a month of selling his Bridgewater business, he had "secured a position in a store at Buzzard' Bay" on Cape Cod.<sup>65</sup>

### **(Central Square Grocery)**

Among the *Independent's* 1912 Christmas "*Shopping Suggestions*" was Central Square Grocery, which, like Casey's, was established in the late 1890's. Located on the ground floor of the newly-built Odd Fellows'

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<sup>65</sup>BI, April 30, Dec. 31, 1920, June 24, Aug. 26, 1921, June 9, July 7, 21, Aug. 11, Sept. 1, Oct. 20, Nov. 10, 17, Dec. 22, 1922, Jan. 19, 1923; Gilbert C. Fite and Jim E. Reese, *An Economic History of the United States* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Riverside Press, 1959), pp. 525-526.

Block, which faced the western side of the Common, this small business from 1899 to 1912 was commonly known as “Alden’s,” so-named after its third proprietor. Born and bred in Bridgewater, Isaac R. Alden was credited with being “an old grocery-man,” who “knows all of the ins and outs from alpha to omega” of the business. While hardly the largest of the nine grocery stores in town in the early 1900’s, its loyal patrons had faith in its proprietor’s claim of selling only “the best line of Staples and a complete list of fancy things...,” orders of which customers by 1904 were able to place easily by telephone; Alden’s, it might be noted, was not one of the three stores dealing in fresh meats. The Bridgewater community was taken by surprise when hearing of Alden’s death on June 28, 1908, at the age of sixty-four. His long obituary in the *Independent* was entitled “Isaac R. Alden: Of Ancient Family and a Gallant Soldier of the Civil War.” About a week later, it was announced that his son Thomas and Lysander H. Washburn would continue to operate the business under the name “Alden’s Central Square Grocery.”<sup>66</sup>

This arrangement lasted on paper for only four years. According to Dickinson Rich’s memoirs, “Tom Alden, the son of the house,” was “lousy with glamour,” but “had terrible asthma,” and “coughed rackingly...,” an observation perhaps explaining in part why he did not play an equal role in managing the market. Washburn, on the other hand, having worked in Alden’s from its beginning, ran the business from 1908 and 1912, allowing it to maintain its reputation as “one of the most up-to-date” stores of its kind in the general area. A major change for the Central Square Grocery occurred in November 1912, when Washburn, having purchased the business from the estate of Isaac R. Alden, became its sole proprietor. While many folks would continue to refer to Alden’s, the name of the market was changed to L. H. Washburn, as evidenced by weekly ads in the *Independent* beginning in December of 1912. A few days after having contributed so much to many of its patrons’ Christmas dinners, the new and sole proprietor was faced with a major crisis. The *Independent*’s headline of rather a long story captured the challenge facing Washburn: “A Very Bad Fire. Blaze of Mysterious Origin Guts Odd Fellows’ Block.” While hardly the only occupant of the fifteen-year building, his first-floor premises and those of his next door neighbor, Locke’s clothing store, suffered their share of smoke damage and loss of stock. The losses for Washburn’s were mitigated by two factors. Evidently, this store received a “satisfactory” share of the insurance settlement agreed to by the Bridgewater Building Association, which owned this block. Also, the store’s new proprietor was able to move his business to the recently completed Flynn-Callahan Block on Broad Street. Within a month, L. H. Washburn announced his return to the “Old Stand In Odd Fellows, but in a new store” with “a new stock,” which soon included a “large assortment of Heinze Goods.” Unlike his next-door neighbor, Locke’s clothing store, which changed hands four months after the fire, Washburn’s continued to be part of Central Square’s commercial life well into the 1920’s, boasting of the “Best brands of Groceries, Canned Goods, Teas and Coffees,” and its “Pure

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<sup>66</sup>BI, Oct. 29, Nov. 19, 1897, Feb. 18 25, 1898, Jan. 20, June 9, 23, Oct. 20, 1899, May 4, Nov. 16, 1900, Feb. 22, 1901, Aug. 29, 1902, Nov. 11, 1904, Jan. 5, Nov. 11, 1905, July 31 (This entry carried an extensive obituary of Alden.), Aug. 7, 1908, June 28, 1912; Census of Massachusetts, 1905, Vol. 3, pp. 273, 276; Dickinson Rich, Innocence Under the Elms, pp. 21-26; for more details on Alden’s store see pages 20-22, and 69-70 in my essay on stores and services in Bridgewater to 1910; bearers at Alden’s funeral, held at the Unitarian Church, were Dr. C. J. Mercer, Harry W. Bragdon, Gustavus Pratt, O. B. Cole, and Preston Hooper, all well-known in the Bridgewater community.



Peanut Butter, made while you wait.” Most likely, some of the store’s older patrons, however, were taken back by the following announcement in the *Independent* on April 30, 1920: “Commencing next week L. H. Washburn will put his store in Odd Fellows block on a cash and carry basis, discontinuing his delivery service.”<sup>67</sup>

### Churchill’s Dry Good Store

Any discussion of Bridgewater’s commercial life in the several years before the United States faced the daunting task of remaining neutral in the devastating European conflict would need to include Churchill’s Dry Goods Co., established in 1894 and situated on the first floor of the Masonic Block on the western side of Central Square, just a few doors south of L. H. Washburn’s (formerly Alden’s). A native of East Bridgewater, Frank N. Churchill was not the first merchant or last to conduct a dry goods enterprise in this wooden structure. While the exact year in which this building was erected remains elusive, an *Independent* reporter in 1933 was most likely correct in averring: “Dry goods have been sold at the stand as far back as the memory of the oldest inhabitant extends.” More verifiable are the purchase of this block in 1869 by Fellowship Lodge, Bridgewater’s oldest Masonic order and its decision three years later to add a third floor to provide “fit up rooms for the permanent use” of this fraternal organization. A fire on April 16, 1884, resulted in \$1,000 to \$1,500 worth of damage to the building, but might have been worse had not the newly purchased Silby Steam Fire Engine been used for the first time. In addition to having the advantage of being situated “in the heart of the business centre in Central Square,” Churchill’s also benefited from public awareness of previous dry goods stores at this location conducted by William F. Brett, Thomas W. Crocker, Paul O. Clark, and the newest proprietor’s immediate predecessor David L. Bodfish. Ranking among Bridgewater’s largest mercantile outfits, Churchill’s firm flourished from the outset, offering its patrons a wide selection of “everything one would expect to find in a first-class establishment of this kind.” That the western side of Central Square in the summer of 1897 became the arrival and departure site of the new trolley system serving Bridgewater certainly contributed to Churchill’s growing business. As the old century was nearing its end, this store also benefited from additional space when “a two-story front” was added to the Masonic building, bringing it fifteen feet closer to the sidewalk. Patrons undoubtedly noticed how new “additions and alterations” allowed Churchill to arrange “all kinds of dry goods...into numerous departments....”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>BI, July 31, Aug. 7, 1908, Jan. 21, 1910, Oct. 27, 1911, Feb. 16, Nov. 22, Dec. 13, 1912, Jan. 3, 17, Feb. 7, 14, 21, 28, March 14, Aug. 8, 1913, Aug. 28, Dec. 11, 1914, May 28, 1915, Jan. 21, 28, April 1, June 30, Oct. 6, 1916, Feb. 21, 1919, April 30, 1920, May 20, 1921, May 4, 1923, Feb. 12, 1926; Bridgewater Book; Dickinson Rich, Innocence Under the Elms, p. 23; Hal Goodnough, “Bridgewater About 1910,” HH, p. 232; Hooper Bishop, “My Memories of Bridgewater, 1908-1920,” Tales Around the Common, p. 42; Lysander Washburn was often called Sandy.

<sup>68</sup>BI, April 18, 25, May 2, 1884, April 11, 18, May 2, 1891, Oct. 30, 1894, Aug. 13, Dec 21, 1895, June 18, 1897, Jan. 20, Sept. 22, Nov. 3, Dec. 15, 1899, Sept. 27, 1912, Feb. 14, 1913, May 5, 1933; Crane, p. 1810; Herbert H. Pratt, “The First Hundred Years” [Bridgewater Fire Fighting ]; Townscape Institute, Form 157, pp. 157-158; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 22-24, 66-68, 99, Fire Service in Bridgewater from 1844 to 1910,” p. 9, Transportation in Bridgewater to 1910, p. 58; HH, p. 235, notice D. L. Bodfish standing in front of his dry goods store; HH, p. 200; “By-Laws of Fellowship Lodge A. F. & A. M. Bridgewater Mass.- Instituted June 15, 1797” (Bridgewater, Mass: A. H. Willis, Printer, 1916), pp. 1-3; in 1967 the old Masonic building was torn down and replaced by a new Masonic Temple to house the Fellowship Lodge; Pictorial History of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, 1987, p. 20; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 77.

The installation of an acetylene gas plant for lighting his store in the fall of 1901 was perhaps an indication of Churchill's anticipation of a "bright" future. And, indeed, for the next thirteen years Bridgewater's premier dry goods store continued to flourish under his proprietorship. Indicative of Churchill's importance to the town's retail trade are the comments made by women who later took the time to write down their reminiscences of this dry goods business, including Louise Dickinson Rich, Ruth Hooper Bishop, and Dorothy Lord Mann. Most likely it was a surprise to many patrons on learning of the purchase of the Churchill Dry Goods Co. store by E. J. Luce of Somerville, Massachusetts, on June 14, 1914. (It might be noted that two weeks later an event leading to the Great War took place, namely the assassination of Franz Joseph, heir apparent to the Austrian-Hungarian throne.) Churchill's decision to sell his retail business was prompted by his desire to devote more time to another of his entrepreneurial endeavors. At least since the late 1890's, he had been active in the cranberry business, owning extensive bogs in Carver, Massachusetts, and serving as secretary-treasurer of the New England Cranberry Sales Co., with offices in nearby Middleboro, Massachusetts. In the summer of 1915, however, he suffered two "shocks" and on August 12 died at his Broad Street home at the age of fifty-seven. In addition to being one of Bridgewater's leading retailers, he had been a member of the Central Congregational Church, the town's largest Protestant church, and a prominent member of Fellowship Lodge. While no one in Bridgewater today would remember Churchill's, it is possible that some of the town's oldest citizens might have memories of Luce & Co. since it remained part of Central Square's commercial configuration until May of 1933. One wonders how shoppers over a century ago reacted to this outfit's placement of a sign of eighty lights extending cross the entire front of the building, making it the largest in Bridgewater? Perhaps faithful patrons of Casey's took umbrage at seeing its sign no longer having this distinction.<sup>69</sup>

### **Hutchison's Lumber Yard**

While most Bridgewater retailers in 1915 were situated on or near Central Square, there were a number of mercantile endeavors scattered elsewhere in the town's twenty-eight square miles. Hutchison's Lumber Yard located on Spring Street was among the largest and most important of these. This was not surprising since the vast majority of the town's 9,381 inhabitants lived in dwelling houses made of wood, despite the growth of Bridgewater's brick industry in the early years of the new century. The genesis of a lumber yard in this area of the town goes back to the early 1880's when A. S. Lyon, cited in Crane's 1884 history of Bridgewater as a "builder," started a lumber business on Broad-Depot Streets. This was not far from the town's first railroad station which had been erected in 1846. For a decade, Lyon's appears to have done a thriving trade, advertising "spruce framing, hemlock boards, shingles, laths, clapboards, and everything usually found in a lumber yard...." In June of 1889,

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<sup>69</sup>BI, Sept. 3, 1897, Aug. 26, Nov. 25, 1898, Nov., 18, 1901, April 17, June 19, 1914, Jan. 8, April 16, Aug. 13, 20, 27, Sept. 10, 17, 25, Oct. 1, Dec. 3, 1915, Aug. 4, 1916, Feb. 22, 1924, Aug. 21, 1925, May 5, 1933; Dickinson Rich, *Innocence Under the Elms*, pp. 28-30; Ruth Hooper Bishop, "My Memories of Bridgewater, 1908-1920," *Tales Around the Common*, p. 42; Dorothy Lord Mann, "I Remember...Or Was I Told," *Tales Around the Common*, p. 52; *Bridgewater Book*, p. v; it should be noted that Minnie H. Churchill, one of four daughters of Florence W. and Frank N. Churchill, managed Luce & Co. in Bridgewater from September 1915 until May 1933, at which time she purchased this dry goods store.

anticipating an expansion of his enterprise, Lyon purchased from Nahum Stetson, long-known for his leadership role in “the upbuilding of the Bridgewater Iron Works,” a lot of land of three and a half acres on Spring Street. In March of 1892, it was reported that Lyon was “removing his former lumber shed” on Broad Street to his newly acquired property which was much closer to Plymouth Street and, more importantly for his business, bordered on the railroad. By then, “authentic sources” were reporting that work on “a new depot” at the corner of Broad and Spring Streets was about to begin. Alas, things did not work out well for Lyon. By the summer of 1893, as a financial panic gripped the country, he was in deep trouble with his “creditors” and made known his intentions “to remove to Michigan, to engage in carpentering and building.” In 1898, his lumber business in Bridgewater was sold to Wendell P. Hutchinson, a native of East Bridgewater, who had handled “every shape and condition” of lumber “since he was a boy.” Lyon’s wife continued to own the property on which her husband’s business had been located until selling the land in 1904 to J. Gardner Bassett. “In the interest of the Bridgewater Brick Company,” he planned “to build a railroad track across Spring Street from the N. Y., N. H. & HR.” This would allow bricks from his yard to the northeast on land once occupied by the Plymouth County Agricultural Society to be loaded “directly from the kiln to the cars.” (At this point in my research, I have yet to discover if Hutchinson ever owned the property on which his lumber company was situated.)<sup>70</sup>

Building upon the patronage once accorded to his predecessor, benefiting from an economic revival following the 1893 depression, and relying on his solid reputation as a lumber dealer, Hutchinson began to build a solid business which would continue to expand well into the next century; the *Independent* carried an ad for Hutchinson’s on Feb. 27, 1925, boasting of selling lumber every year since 1898 to several well-known Bridgewater customers, including the Henry Perkins foundry, George S. McNeeland contracting firm, and Bridgewater Normal School. By the early 1900’s, Hutchinson’s advertisements could rhetorically ask: “Where Do You Buy Your Lumber?” Aware that his stock of lumber came from “Eastern, Western and Southern” areas of the country, Hutchinson early saw the advantages of erecting “a new lumber shed on his land near the railroad tracks.” Homeowners, professional carpenters, and contracting companies came to rely on his yard not only for types of lumber, but for also for cement, lime, and many other building materials, all of which could be ordered by telephone beginning in 1908. As was true of other proprietors of well-known commercial firms in Bridgewater, Hutchinson soon became interested in other worthwhile endeavors which benefited his community. A biographical account would need to discuss his election in 1904 as one of the directors of the Bridgewater Cooperative Bank, founded in 1902 as the town’s second financial institution. At this time, Hutchinson also began to play a leading role in the Nippenicket Tribe of the Improved Order of Red Men in Bridgewater, a fraternity which joined other organizations

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<sup>70</sup>BI, Jan. 11, March 4, 11, 1884, May 23, 1885, Nov. 29, 1887, April 7, 1888, Jan. 25, June 1, 29, Dec. 28, 1889, May 31, 1891, March 19, 1892, June 10, 1893, Feb. 3, Sept. 30, Oct. 13, Nov. 11, 18, 1904, March 3, April 7, 1905, June 14, 1907; Massachusetts Census, 1915, p. 100; History of the Old Colony Railroad, p. 372; Crane, pp. 796, 820-821; “Nahum Stetson,” Representative Men and Old Families of South-Eastern Massachusetts (Chicago: Beers, 1912), V., pp. 258-259; “W. P. Hutchinson,” Bridgewater Book; “Stetson, Nahum, 1807-1894, -Industrialist,” HH, p. 278; HH, p. 143; see Spence’s essays on stores and services, manufacturing, and transportation in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 28, 30, 64-66, 30, respectively; Flora Townsend Little, Wreath of Memories, no pagination.

in the early 1900's seeking improvement in the quality of life for the town's residents.<sup>71</sup>

The five years preceding the Great War were good ones for Hutchison's family and business. He and his wife, three daughters, and son lived in a "beautiful" Queen Anne style house on Shaw Road; before it was demolished in 2016, its neighbor across the street since 1971 had been the Maxwell Library of Bridgewater State College-University. Listed among the important Bridgewater commercial endeavors in 1912 and 1913 by the *Independent*, Hutchison's business on Spring Street was cited as the place to go for a myriad of "lumber and building materials" when contemplating repairing or building a house. To accommodate an expanding trade during these years, he erected an office building, new lumber sheds, a two-story facility for storing and sawing wood, and a garage to "accommodate two machines." Most likely Hutchinson's "new Ford automobile," purchased from the Bridgewater Inn Garage in 1913, was for family and personal use, where as the acquisition of "a new truck" in 1915 facilitated the transportation of wood to his patrons and also occasionally to sites on which he was engaged in his own building projects. As early as 1895, three years before he acquired the lumber yard business from Lyon, he supervised the erection of a tenement house on Hale street, which runs from Plymouth Street to Broad Street. Between 1911 and 1915, he was awarded the contract to build the hall at Grange Park on South Street and two tenement houses on Spring Street, quite possibly to provide housing for some folks in Bridgewater who worked in the town's leading shoe factories, McElwain's and L. Q. White's. Another indication of Hutchison's well-being between 1911 and 1915 was the appearance of his name on the annual lists of "Large Tax Payers," found in the *Independent* and the town's annual reports. The tax assessment on his property went from \$208.72 in 1911 to \$395.75 five years later. Perhaps reflecting the economic prosperity prior to the Great Depression, the taxes of Bridgewater's leading lumber entrepreneur in 1924 reached \$645.10.<sup>72</sup>

#### **Scotton's Dry Goods Store**

A number of Bridgewater's retail stores which had their start in the first decade of the twentieth century continued to serve the public in 1915 and, in some cases, well into the 1920's. Established in 1904, Scotton & Tyler's dry goods store was the largest of several commercial endeavors occupying space in the so-called Elwell block on the eastern side of Central Square between the Fairbanks-Prophett property and the Town Hall to the southwest and the Bridgewater Inn to the northeast. Having discussed the retail activities in Central Square up to 1910 in a previous essay, my comments on Scotton's in this essay will be limited to some pertinent historical background and how this store fared in the five years leading to the European War. In the 1870's and 1880's, a number of commercial undertakings, including Ferguson's shoe store, Charles F. Meyer's men shop, and Sarah E.

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<sup>71</sup>BI, April 5, 1901, June 13, Aug. 15, 1902, Jan. 1, Sept. 30, Nov. 11, Dec. 30, 1904, May 26, 1905, Sept. 7, 1906, June 14, July 12, 1907, Jan. 10, 1908, Feb. 27, June 5, Aug. 28, 1925; Bridgewater Book; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 28, 85-86.

<sup>72</sup>BI, Nov. 30, 1895, June 14, 1907, March 18, 1910, Aug. 11, Oct. 13, 1911, June 7, 14, 21, 28, Nov. 29, 1912, March 28, July 25, Dec. 19, 1913, July 2, Aug. 6, Sept. 3, 1915, Aug. 18, 1916, Sept 13, 1918, Sept. 7, 1923, Sept. 5, 1924, Aug. 28, 1925; Thomas R. Turner, Not to be Ministered Unto, But to Minister: Bridgewater State University, 1840-2010 (Bridgewater State University, 2012), p. 259; this latter source is an invaluable contribution to this institution's long history; Townscape Institute, Form 203, pp. 203-204.

Welch's millinery store, rented space in the Mitchell block, located on that section of the eastern side of Central Square facing the northern part of the Bridgewater Common. This property however, underwent quite a change in 1891. After purchasing the Ward estate on the corner of Summer Street and what became Park Terrace in 1913, Albert J. Elwell, "a gentleman of wealth," moved his family from Boston to Bridgewater in May of 1888. Three years later he became the owner of the Mitchell block, immediately making physical improvements to the interior and exterior of the occupying businesses. By far the most dramatic change was the "rebuilding" of the eastern-most part of the property, just to the southwest of the Hyland House (renamed the Bridgewater Inn in 1894). There is disagreement as to whether this section of the Elwell block had been the former site of the town's Centre School. What is clear is that Elwell in 1891 acquired by public auction the Centre or Number One School on the corner of Summer and Grove Street, which since 1880 had been used as a School of Observation by Bridgewater Normal. No longer necessary with the inclusion of the state-run Model School in the new Normal classroom building of 1891, Elwell had the Centre School structure "taken down carefully piece by piece and rebuilt into" his recently acquired block. In the following ten years, he made two other major alterations which remain visible to Bridgewater folks over a century later: a common entrance to the second floor connecting the two main sections of this property and a one-story addition in 1901 at its eastern end. This was the first structure to be made of bricks produced at the newly established Bassett brickyard along the Town River east of Broad Street.<sup>73</sup>

In 1898, Miss A. M. Foster, taking advantage of a vacancy in that part of Elwell's block rebuilt in 1891, became the proprietress of a "5 and 10 cent store." Hailing from Orange, Massachusetts, where she had "conducted

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<sup>73</sup>BI, July 30, Dec. 17, 1887, April 7, May 19, June 9, 16 July 7, 14, 1888, Feb. 9, 22, 1889, April 26, Dec. 6, 1890, Jan. 24, May 16, 23, July 4, 18, 25, Aug. 22, Sept. 5, Oct. 10, 17, Nov. 22, Dec. 5, 1891, Feb. 13, April 4, May 12, July 18, Sept. 17, 1892, Nov. 6, 1897, May 13, 30, June 13, July 18, 1902, Feb. 2, 1924; Crane, p. 796; Townscape Institute, Form 55, pp. 178-180; Spence, Services and Stores in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 9, 56-64, Education in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 4-5, 24-25; Flora T. Little, Wreath of Memories, an unpublished memoir, multiple copies of which can be found in the Bridgewater public library; "Scrapbook-District NO. 1 School," found in the Bridgewater Public Library; Dr. Robert D. Curdy, "Education," HH, p. 101; Tales Around the Common, p. 18; three years after the death of Elwell in 1907, his house was torn down and the real estate company of Keith and White began erecting a new house on the same site; for a number of years it was the home of Mr. and Mrs. (daughter of Orrin Bradford Cole, Bridgewater's well-known pharmacist) George Barney; this dwelling is now occupied by the Political Science Department of Bridgewater State University and has been named in honor of Dr. Guy C. Clifford, who served the institution between 1967 and 1996; the "Bridgewater Historic Cultural Resources Inventory" placed the Center School at Forty Central Square, Mitchell Block, in the early 1860's; "Accepted Streets," Town of Bridgewater, p. 10; Rizer Collection, # 535 (see the Explanation section of this essay); Pictorial History: Bridgewater, Massachusetts, 1994, p. 18; while Albert J. Elwell lived in Bridgewater for only seventeen years, he was described by the Independent in July 1902 "as the fifth wheel in the business life of the town;" among other contributions were his leadership role in the formation of the Bridgewater Commercial Club and his assent to serve as the first president of the Bridgewater Cooperative Bank in the early 1900's; following the burning of the small building housing the U. S. Post Office on the western side of Central Square in 1888, this federal facility was moved across the Common to the Mitchell Block where it occupied the vacated "dry and fancy goods store" run for several years by Herbert Pratt; suggestions to myself or future researchers --there is a need for essays on the history of the Bridgewater postal system and another comparing and contrasting the civic and economic contributions to Bridgewater of Samuel P. Gates and Albert J. Elwell; a more extensive essay on the Elwell block would need to mention other commercial enterprises that came and went during the years between 1891 and 1910.

a dry goods store,” Foster, described by the *Independent* as “an agreeable and pleasant lady,” was soon running a successful retail business, her motto from the start being “Honest Goods at Lowest Prices.” Evidently expecting to remain in Bridgewater for some time, her premise were doubled in 1901 when she occupied the millinery shop of Sarah A. Welch next door, who had decided to move into one of two commercial spaces of the new brick addition to Elwell’s property. After conducting a thriving trade for about six years, Foster, perhaps to the surprise of many town’s shoppers, announced in late April 1904 her decision to have a “Closing--Out Sale.”<sup>74</sup>

Eleven days before Christmas of that year, her enlarged quarters in the Elwell block were taken over by the firm of Scotton & Tyler, a dry goods outfit, which would soon offer competition to Churchill’s on the western side of Central Square; no doubt the location of Hayes’s ice cream parlor (also known for its daily offering of hot roasted peanuts) immediately south of this latest enterprise in the Elwell block did its part in luring more shoppers to the Square’s eastern side. While the *Independent* ads referred to the “new” commercial establishment by the names of its two owners, the public soon knew that Charles F. Scotton and his wife were “in charge of the store.” Most likely the partners had heard about Elwell’s “slight paralytic shock” in July of 1902,” and were not surprised by his decision three years later to sell “his “magnificent residence on Summer Street and move to Brookline.” Elwell’s departure brought no immediate change in the ownership of his various Bridgewater properties. From the start, Scotton & Tyler flourished, its newspaper ads listing a plethora of dry goods for all ages and reminding shoppers “It Pays to Trade at...,” a catchy phrase used well into the 1920’s. To maintain a brisk business after their first successful Christmas, a “Great February Sale” was announced, perhaps in part to reduce surplus stock left over from the Yule season. Permitting “The Ladies” of the town’s Unitarian Society to hold their “Food Sale” in the store’s in early March of 1905 started a tradition of according this courtesy to other churches and civic organizations. This practice not only increased the business’s patronage on a given day but also cemented the long-range relationship with the public, an important consideration in small towns like Bridgewater. Scotton also joined the town’s newly-organized Business Men’s Association in 1906 and was appointed to a committee of three charged with canvassing town’s merchants about their feelings concerning night openings. Later in that year a majority of retailers, including Scotton’s, agreed to keep stores open on Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday nights, an important and shrewd decision since a major portion of Bridgewater’s of 6,000 inhabitants worked long hours in the shoe industry. In early October of the following year, residents of Bridgewater “were saddened...at the death of Albert J. Elwell.” Unlike Fairbanks and Ferguson, Scotton and Tyler evidently did not attend the funeral in Somerville. The uncertainty over the future of the Elwell block and the national Financial Panic of 1907 appeared not to be detrimental, however, to their dry goods business.<sup>75</sup>

While the store continued to flourish between 1910 and 1915, the decade began with two basic

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<sup>74</sup>BI, Nov. 12, 1897, Aug. 12, Sept. 9, 23, 1898, Jan. 20, 1899, Aug. 23, Nov. 22, Dec.13, 1901, April 29, 1904; Spence, Services and Stores in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 12-13, 59-60.

<sup>75</sup>BI, Dec. 2, 16, 1904, Feb. 3, March 10, 1905, Feb. 16, April 13, 20, Nov. 16,1906, Oct. 4, 25, Dec. 13, 1907, Feb. 4, March 28, 1908; Massachusetts Census, 1905, vol. 1, p. 819; Mann, “I Remember...Or was I Told,” Tales Around the Common, p. 52; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 58-59.

organizational changes. On September 20, 1910, “papers were passed transferring the Elwell property on Central Square and School Street to J. A. Bowman,” long-known for his express business with an office abutting Cole’s Drug Store. Scotton and Tyler, along with other retailers on the block, were undoubtedly pleased when its new owner within a month had his newly acquired property shingled. Five months later, town shoppers were not surprised on hearing that the partnership of these two men was dissolved and “the growing business is henceforth to be conducted by Charles F. Scotton, the firm’s active partner from its beginning.” In the 1911 “Merchants’ Christmas Edition,” the *Independent* took note of his two large windows’...filled with dry goods and notions tastefully arranged.” During the following year, the store’s ads, while continuing to remind the public that “It Pays to Trade at...,” began to prominently display its telephone number. Indicative of the increasing demand for automobiles in Bridgewater, Scotton for a time became an agent of Metz Cars which could be delivered for \$475 and reportedly would get “28 to 32 miles” on one gallon of gasoline. Four days following the Christmas of 1913, the *Independent* carried a note from Scotton to his patrons extending a “hearty and sincere thanks to the good people of Bridgewater and the vicinity for the enormous amount of Holiday Trading they have done in our store during the past few weeks.” From the start of the Great War to the middle of the 1920’s, despite competition from other stores, including Luce & Co, which had taken over Churchill’s dry goods store in 1914, and James Edgar Company in Brockton, Plymouth County’s only city, the Scottons derived more than adequate living from their commercial enterprise and enjoyed their comfortable home on Clarence Avenue in Bridgewater. <sup>76</sup>

### Men’s Store

#### Locke’s--Caldwell’s

During the first quarter of twentieth century, Bridgewater boys and men who were interested in wearing quality clothing undoubtedly found what they wanted at one of three small businesses which consecutively occupied the same premise on the ground floor of Odd Fellows’ building. Located on the western side of Central Square, this still extant three-storied wooden building, financed by the Bridgewater Building Association, was dedicated in December of 1897. Having written previously about the first two proprietors who ran this clothing enterprise, my comments about them in this essay are limited. Christian Schelde, whose business address was 23

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<sup>76</sup>BI, Sept. 23, Oct. 28, 1910, Jan. 13, 20, March 31, 1911, March 29, Dec. 13, 1912, Oct. 3, Nov. 14, Dec. 26, 1913, Aug. 9, 1918, Oct. 27, 1920; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 61, 90; Tales Around the Common, p. 8; “Accepted Streets,” Town of Bridgewater, p. 3; prior to becoming an Accepted Street on March 6, 1911, Clarence Avenue had been a private way known as Keith Avenue; evidently Clarence Keith was instrumental in building some of the houses on this street; Bowman would own the property acquired from the Elwell estate until 1923; Pictorial History: Bridgewater, Massachusetts, 1987, p. 13; the following piece from the *Independent* on March 23, 1923, while not mentioning Elwell, helped me to clarify an important part of the history of the eastern side of Bridgewater’s Central Square: “A real estate deal of more than unusual magnitude was completed this week when J. A. Bowman sold his holdings in Central Square and on the East side of School street to Ralph W. Case and Atty. E. E. Cushman. The Central Square property comprises the block occupied by the stores of R. H. Ferguson, C. W. Hayes, and C. F. Scotton on the first floor and lodge rooms, offices, and a small hall on the second. The School street property consists of a three-story tenement next to the fire station, and a barn in the rear. The barn was for many years used by the town for housing its teams and tools and more recently as a livery stable.”

Central Square, became “the sole proprietor of [this] clothing and gents’ furnishing goods business” in July 1899. Within a year Schelde acquired a next-door neighbor when Isaac R. Alden took over the Central Square Grocery, occupying the other half of the block’s first floor, his address being 27 Central Square. By September of that year, passersby surely took note of “a dandy piece of gold lettering” on Schelde’s big show windows, the work of Edward Brown, Bridgewater’s “well-known sign painter....” In 1902, the new proprietor announced his decisions to expand his retail business by adding custom tailoring, repairing, cleaning, and pressing of clothes, and acting as an agency for the White Star Laundry (a Brockton company). In early 1903, Schelde’s reportedly became the first retailer in Bridgewater to display a “Union Label” on his merchandise; interestingly enough, at this very time the newly organized Bridgewater branch of the Boot & Shoe Workers’ Union started its long drive to convince the McElwain shoe company, the town’s biggest employer, to include union labeling on its products. When Schelde, a native of Norway, moved from Norwood, Massachusetts, to Bridgewater with his new wife, May, nee Whitaker, they seemingly had every intention of making this community a long-time residence. This proved not to be the case, however. In March of 1904, after selling the tailoring part of his business, Schelde accepted “a position...with the Boston office of the New York Life Insurance Co.” He most likely took the 6:42 A. M. train from the depot on Broad Street to the state’s capitol every weekday until he and his wife moved on July 1 from their tenement on Spring Hill Avenue to Dorchester, a part of greater Boston.<sup>77</sup>

Posting a vacancy sign at 23 Central Square was unnecessary since the name of Arthur G. Locke had accompanied that of Schelde in the store’s weekly ad of March 11. “A traveling salesman...connected with the same line of goods” carried by the previous proprietor, Locke would remain part of Central Square’s commercial scene until 1913, offering an extensive assortment of men’s and boy’s furnishings. One of his ads strongly suggested his patrons not “wait until you are shabby before ordering a new suit,” either “ready-made” or fitted and sewn by the store’s tailor. On a less grand style, maybe today’s shoppers might be surprised on reading that Locke’s offered B. V. D. men’s underwear and straw and stiff felt Derby hats to don the heads of well-dressed men. Other present-day shoppers might identify with another of this outfit’s efforts to increase its patronage, namely the practice of giving “Green Trading Stamps” with each purchase. Boasting of the “largest assortment of Neckties that Bridgewater ever had,” another ad with the title “Ties that Bind,” (the words “Bless be the” were not included) might have drawn attention in a town where hymn-singing Protestants still made up the majority of the population. While promoting his own business through advertising, Locke, two years after taking over the store, played a significant role in the formation of a businessmen’s club. At a meeting held in the 19 Central Square studio of Charles H. King’s, Bridgewater’s leading photographer since the middle of the 1890’s, and presided over by Frank N. Churchill, Locke was appointed to a committee of three “to draw up a constitution” for the new organization. Following McElwain’s shoe factory decision to change its payday to Wednesday in the fall of 1906, Locke was

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<sup>77</sup>BI, April 28, July 14, Oct. 20, Dec. 29, 1899, May 4, Sept. 20, Oct. 26, Nov. 20, 1900, Jan. 1, Feb. 22, March 22, Aug. 2, Sept. 22, 1901, March 2, Oct. 17, 1902, Feb. 5, 19, March 25, April 15, July 1, 1904; Massachusetts Census, 1915, p. 336 (lists only 9 people of Norwegian descent in Bridgewater at this time); Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 20-22, 70-71; Spence, Manufacturing in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 37-38; Townscape Institute, Form 45, p. 153.



active in persuading most members of the Bridgewater Business Men's Association to open on Wednesday evening, allowing working class patrons to settle up their "running accounts," and perhaps to purchase something new.<sup>78</sup>

Between 1910 and late 1912 was a good time for Locke's business, as it became recognized as Bridgewater's leading men's and boy's clothing outfit; shoppers were surely appreciative of "a new awning...added to the front" of his store in the sultry month of August 1911. He continued to rely on advertising in the *Independent* as the chief way of increasing his patronage, especially during holiday seasons such as Easter and Christmas. His ad of April 7, 1911, for instance, warned would-be customers of their "LAST CHANCE" to purchase a "Tailor-Made" suit at a cost of \$13.50 to \$40.00. Not wanting to discourage folks who could not afford them or make a timely decision, shoppers were assured that "Locke, The Clothier, was "now carrying a large supply of Ready-made clothing," including suits running from "\$7.00 to \$18.00." During the yuletide of that year, Locke's, one of the retailers cited in the *Independent's* "Our Merchants Christmas Edition," appealed to a broad spectrum of townspeople by informing buyers of its "extra grand lot of Christmas goods in ties, handkerchiefs, hats, and gents furnishings in particular." In June of 1912 Locke's was accorded further attention when the *Independent's* editor James H. Dickinson, who had taken over the newspaper one year after Locke had arrived in Bridgewater, decided to conduct a "Who is Who" contest, asking readers to identify 32 of the town's "most successful business houses." I suspect most Bridgewater folks easily identified number nine on the list as A. G. Locke's, which read as follows: "Who sells Michael Stearn's & Co.'s clothing? The clothing of style and quality and gives complete satisfaction. He sells the latest in style in men's furnishings, also hats and caps. See his line of straw hats...what is his leading line in hats and men's shirts?"<sup>79</sup>

While most of Locke's time and energy was devoted to his clothing business, the years between 1908 and 1912 found him increasingly involved with the sport of bowling, one of several athletic activities gaining in popularity in most American communities, including small towns like Bridgewater. By 1908, he headed a fine group of bowlers labeled the "Locke's Specials" which was soon challenged by other teams, including a very large one organized at McElwain's by Louis E. Stevens, one of the company's foremen. Locke was an avid and skillful bowler, achieving the highest score for his "Specials" in a "close game" played that year in nearby Brockton. While his team lost, he probably added new patrons to his clothing business by offering one of his store's hats "to the bowler among the other four of the teams having the highest score at the end of the season." Locke's greatest contribution to this sport in his adopted town, however, came in the spring of 1910 when, after attempting to do so for two years, he and Stevens received permission from the selectmen "to conduct" the community's first bowling

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<sup>78</sup>BI, March 11, 25, July 22, Aug. 5, 12, Sept. 30, 1904, Nov. 24, 1905, Feb. 9, 16, Nov. 16, 1906, March 1, April 7, Oct. 4, Dec. 20, 1907, Feb. 14, March 13, June 17, 1910; "Charles H. King: Bridgewater's Up-To-Date Photographer," *Bridgewater Book*, no pagination; Spence, *Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910*, pp. 71-73; Lord, "First Quarter of the Century in Bridgewater," *Tales around the Common*, p. 49.

<sup>79</sup>BI, April 7, Aug. 4, Dec. 15, 1911, June 21, 28, Nov. 22, 1912, Jan. 13, 1949; "Dickinson, James H., 1865 to 1949--Newspaper publisher," *HH*, pp. 261-262; Dickinson Rich, *Innocence Under the Elms*, especially see chapter nine, pp. 234-264.

alley. Aiding in this adventure was Benjamin F. Ellis who agreed to have erected on his property near the railroad track, on the north side of Broad Street, a brick “building 25 x 97... after the most modern ideas of deadening sound.” Shortly before construction started, Locke and Stevens signed a three-year lease. They were most likely assured that the building would “be heated with hot water, ...lighted by electric lights, ... have a complete toilet room, ...and other conveniences....” In early August, these two men formally opened “their new bowling parlors” and one year later purchased the Ellis property on which the “bowling alley, a store, and dwelling house” were situated. But the days of the co-partnership were numbered, first by Stevens’s departure from Bridgewater in June of 1912 to accept a position at the McElwain factory in Newburyport, Massachusetts and in November by a legal dispute with other interests concerning the Broad Street property. A few days after Christmas, Locke was confronted with an even greater problem when his Central Square clothing store, his main source of income, was among several occupants of the Odd Fellows’ block, a fifteen-year old wooden structure, whose premises suffered a blaze of “Mysterious Origin.”<sup>80</sup>

Like its next-door neighbor, Washburn’s grocery store, Locke’s clothing establishment was covered by insurance, although its losses were mostly “from smoke and water, the fire not reaching [his] side of the building.” Both affirming determination to remain part of the town center’s retail configuration, their immediate approaches to achieving this differed. Washburn moved to temporary quarters in the recently completed Flynn-Callahan block at 49 Broad Street. Locke had a grand sale of existing stock and then immediately and “thoroughly” renovated and painted his store’s interior. By late February, these two retail endeavors were back in their respective quarters on the ground floor of the Odd Fellows’ building, giving the appearance that the situation had returned to normal. Locke continued to regularly advertise in the *Independent*, boasting of his entirely new stock of “ready-made” men’s clothing. His extra-large ad of March 21 suggested seeing the store’s “large number of Good Clothes ...before buying your Easter Suit.”<sup>81</sup>

Most Bridgewater men and boys who added to their wardrobes that Easter did not entertain the thought of their purchases being their last from the town’s leading male “clothier.” In the immediate aftermath of the fire three months earlier, many folks had heard and/or read about rumors of Locke’s plans “to retire from business at the close of his fire and water sale.” He had averred that such speculation was “entirely without foundation” and his intention was to “start with an entirely new line of goods” when the present stock was “closed out.” Perhaps

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<sup>80</sup>BI, May 13, 20, 27, June 3, 10, July 1, 8, 29, Aug. 5, 12, Oct. 28, 1910, Jan. 3, 1913, July 23, 1920; this last entry in the *Independent* noted the following: “The old bowling alley on Broad Street has been purchased by C. Chronis, who has moved his fruit store there and has added a first-class market;” after talking with one of the present owners of Crispi’s Italian Restaurant on Broad Street, I am able to verify that this business now occupies the building once the home of the Locke-Stevens bowling alleys; recent renovations uncovered a lower level of flooring clearly revealing that it consisted of a small number of alleys; undoubtedly the building housing Bridgewater’s first bowling alley was one of two brick structures on Broad Street prompting one observer to write in early August 1910: “Those two new buildings on Broad Street will add much to the impression of the town as viewed from the railroad trains.”

<sup>81</sup>BI, Jan. 3, 10, Feb. 21, March 7, 14, 21, 1913; see page 36 in this essay for Washburn’s reaction to the fire in the Odd Fellows’ Block.

some patrons were curious about his “business trip” to Chicago in late January, maybe thinking it was about checking on the latest styles in men’s clothing. About two weeks after Easter, all guessing about Locke’s future in Bridgewater came to an end. A short item in the *Independent* announced that he “Has Gone West,” after selling his “household goods at auction.” Accompanied by his former bowling alley partner Louis E. Stevens, Locke traveled to Fort Wayne, Indiana. If “conditions” proved favorable,” they hoped “to establish a chain of wet wash laundries in the West.”<sup>82</sup>

On April 11, 1913, the *Independent* carried the following “Announcement” from Arthur F. Caldwell: “I have purchased the entire stock of Clothing and Furnishing Goods of A. G. Locke and will continue to do business in an up-to-date manner at the same store.” In addition to taking over a very popular and flourishing enterprise, the new proprietor, who hailed from Brockton, Plymouth County’s largest community, could rightfully stress his “long experience in the clothing business....” That his father, Benjamin T. “was well known to many Bridgewater people” as “a member of the old established clothing store of Howard and Caldwell of Brockton” might have helped increase his son’s patronage; the elder Caldwell passed away on March 12, 1916. “Caldwell’s on the Square” remained in business for twelve years, boasting of the variety, quality, and fair prices of its merchandise. In the late summer of 1925, however, this commercial firm closed for two weeks due to “financial difficulties.” When it re-opened on September 9, it was under the management of two new proprietors, Fred A. and Harry M. Snow of Brockton, who already owned two clothing stores, one in Campello, a section of Brockton, and the other in Weymouth, Massachusetts; their proprietorship of the Bridgewater store was intact at the start of the next decade.

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### Leonard’s Market

While most of Bridgewater’s commercial enterprises discussed so far clustered around Central Square, shoppers also patronized a number of stores located on that part of Broad Street from its juncture with Summer and Main Streets to the railway depot. Among the more important of these was Leonard’s Market, located at 33 Broad Street and noted for its fine array of groceries and meats. A brief review of this store’s background and its first ten years of operation, although touched upon in one my earlier essays, might prove helpful to my readers. Between 1894 and 1901, Frank Williams and John Mayo had conducted at this location the very successful Broad Street Market, praised for enjoying “the confidence of all classes in the community.” (Bear in mind that Bridgewater, along with other small Bay State towns, was going through a period of transition. Its population was becoming more ethnically diverse with more and more folks finding employment in factories, especially those manufacturing shoes and iron-steel products.) This partnership came to an end in 1901, with Williams becoming the market’s sole proprietor. In an early ad, he assured customers of their meat orders being cut, trimmed, and sent

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<sup>82</sup>BI, Jan. 3, 10, 31, Feb. 21, March 7, April 11, 18, 25, 1913.

<sup>83</sup>BI, April 11, 18, May 2, July 11, Aug. 1, Sept. 19, Oct. 10, 1913, March 17, 1916, Feb. 29, 1924, Sept. 4, 25, Dec., 25, 1925, April 11, 1930; Bridgewater Book; separate ads of both Caldwell’s appeared in this publication; Hal Goodnough, “Bridgewater About 1910,” HH, p. 233; Pictorial History: Bridgewater, Massachusetts, 1994, p. 28 (the chronology under this picture appears to be wrong since Caldwell’s in Bridgewater did not begin business until 1913); Tales Around the Common, p. 10.

home “ready for the fire.” Some dissatisfaction with the necessity of staying open every night, except on Sunday (perhaps in part for many customers who had no modern refrigeration) most likely was one consideration in his decision to sell his business in November of 1902 to Benjamin A. Leonard and J. F. Wixon. The latter, however, would remain a partner for only three months, with Leonard becoming the sole proprietor of this popular market in January 1903.<sup>84</sup>

“Al” Leonard, as he was familiarly called, had certain advantages as he took full control of the Broad Street market, situated to the northeast of Roger’s tin and hardware shop and Casey’s trolley-waiting room-ice-cream parlor-newspaper stand. He moved into a well-established business, known for fine offerings, excellent services, devoted patrons, and location on the Broad Street streetcar rail line; when this part of Bridgewater’s trolley system was completed in June of 1898, Williams & Mayo’s had lost no time in announcing: “Electric Cars Pass our Door.” Before moving to the Campello section of Brockton in 1900, Leonard had lived with his father J. Herbert, well-known for his “keen interest in town affairs” and “farming activities” in a large farmhouse on Main Street, not far from the West Bridgewater line. Most likely, some of Leonard’s early patrons also knew his wife H. Agnes, who graduated from Bridgewater High School, located in the Academy Building in Central Square, and the State Normal School in Castleton, Vermont. Before starting to teach in Bridgewater’s newly renovated Dyer elementary school in 1904, she had also taken a special course at Bridgewater Normal. Leonard’s employment as a motorman on the street railway for several years made him “a familiar figure” to many folks in town “who used the street cars....” Also, to his advantage, he came “from a family of marketmen,” and had “learned the meat business as a young man.”<sup>85</sup>

For eighteen years, Leonard’s, known to some folks as the Broad Street market, generally adapted well to changes in the town and the retail grocery business. In 1905, Bridgewater’s population of about 6,500 was served by nine groceries stores, with only Leonard’s Broad Street Market and Simmons and Flynn’s Central Square

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<sup>84</sup>BI, Dec. 14, 1895, Feb. 15, Dec. 18, 1896, Oct. 22, Dec. 24, 1897, Jan. 20, Aug. 25, 1899, Feb. 22, April 12, 1901, Nov. 7, 1902, Jan. 30, 1903, July 15, 1921; this latter entry has Edwin Wixon, as Leonard’s partner; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater, Massachusetts to 1910, pp. 80-81; Bridgewater Book, p. V.

<sup>85</sup>BI, Nov. 7, 1902, June 26, Dec. 18, 1903, Sept. 23, 1904, Nov. 23, 1906, Jan. 11, 1907, Feb. 23, 1910, Dec. 3, 1915, Jan. 4, 1918, Dec. 11, 1925; “School Reports,” Annual Town Report, 1905, p. 25, 1906, p. 17; Lord, “First Quarter of the Century in Bridgewater,” Tales Around the Common, p. 48; Goodnough, “Bridgewater Around 1910,” HH, p. 232; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, pp. 86-87; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 80-82, Transportation in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 58-59; “J. Herbert Leonard, Farmer,” Bridgewater Book; Townscape Institute, Form 129, pp. 331-332; cited as a “progressive farmer,” J. Herbert Leonard took great interest in the affairs of Bridgewater, as evidenced by his active roles in the Grange and the Plymouth County Agricultural Society and his willingness to serve for a number years as the town’s Inspector of Cattle (see Annual Town Reports, 1908, p. 60, 1910, p. 63, 1911, p. 54, 1914, pp. 62-63, for instances; this last reference reminds me once again of the need for a thorough study of the history of agriculture in Bridgewater; if anyone with the time and desire to undertake this project, I would gladly share my many clippings from the *Independent* between 1877 and 1925 and other primary and secondary sources; I have chosen not to discuss in this essay the career of Jerome B. Rogers who before his retirement in March 1912 ran a hardware business in the same building on Broad Street for over forty years; readers may wish to see my discussion of Rogers’s multi-faceted business to 1910 in my essay on stores and services in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 26-27, 79-80; the *Independent’s* account on March 22, 1912, of his business and decision to retire is worth reading.

Market, however, displaying an extensive array of meat and poultry offerings. Following in the footsteps of Williams and Mayo, Leonard indicated his intention of carrying “a complete line of meats, provisions, and canned goods of the best quality.” Promising to “run a delivery and order cart about the town,” he joined other commercial outfits in the village center who relied on horses and telephones to increase their patronage. One of Leonard’s early ads read: “If you have not got a window card, please call or notify us.” Another one urged its customers to leave “your order with us and we will guarantee satisfaction.” Commenting on Leonard’s window display of the 1904 yuletide, the *Independent* praised the Broad Street market (B. A. Leonard’s) for attempting, “successfully, to reach the inner man through the eye, and laying out “its wares in tempting array.” While I cannot pinpoint the exact year in which Leonard’s installed a modern electrified system for keeping its meat and poultry fresh, this market by 1910 had become a popular component of Bridgewater center’s commercial life. Reminiscences of Arthur C. Lord and Hal Goodnough cite this market.<sup>86</sup>

From 1910 to 1915, Leonard’s continued to thrive, its proprietor making some changes in business operations and facing a challenge to his well-being. In the 1911 *Independent’s* “Merchants’ Christmas Edition,” the Broad Street Market was noted for its “extra nice line of meats as well as the inevitable turkey, without which the Christmas dinner is not complete.” Perhaps leaning toward Theodore Roosevelt’s approach to political reform, Al Leonard’s ad on January 5, 1912, urged folks to: “Commence the New Year by trading at the place where they always give you a ‘SQUARE Deal.’” In the summer of that year, the *Independent’s* “Who is Who in Bridgewater” contest recommended that shoppers shop at Leonard’s for “the best” in “fancy and staple groceries...,” including Autocrat coffee. Planning to expand his offerings at the start of the decade, Leonard had purchased the Bridgewater Bakery, located at 19 Broad Street, from Thomas H. Sutcliffe. But, within days, Leonard had a change of heart, selling this business to M. J. Conway of Cambridge. As Europe was careening toward war in July of 1914 one of Leonard’s decisions did become a reality with the announcement that “Robert Jackson, formerly with the A. I. Simmons, has purchased the meat cart of B. A. Leonard and will continue the same.” Other than knowing that Leonard lived in a house at 400 Main Street in Bridgewater, the taxes of which were listed under his wife’s name, I have discovered little about his personal and home life during these years, except for an accident he incurred in March of 1912, when he “fell from a wagon at the railway station.” He fractured both bones in his left arm. While one of them “healed nicely;” the other three months later required an X-ray and a resetting procedure which was performed in a Boston hospital.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>BI, Nov. 7, 1902, Dec. 23, 1904, Nov. 23, 1906, Jan 11, 1907, July 15, 1921; Lord, “First Quarter of the Century in Bridgewater,” Tales Around the Common, p. 48; Goodnough, “Bridgewater Around 1910,” HH, p. 232; Census of Massachusetts, 1905, Vol. I, p. 819, Vol. III, pp. 273, 276; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910, p. 80.

<sup>87</sup>BI, Feb. 25, March 4, 1910, Nov. 24, Dec. 15, 1911, Jan. 5, June 14, 21, 28, 1912, March 6, July 10, 1914, May 28, Dec. 3, 1915, Dec. 11, 1925; Conway was not the last proprietor of the Broad Street Bakery; the Independent Bakery occupied the Reilly building at 19 Broad Street after it was sold in 1914, and proceeded to purchase a large Buick delivery truck; the *Middleboro Gazette* rebuked the sign on this vehicle reading “French, Italian, and German Rye Bread,” for not having “a particularly neutral sound.”

Between 1915 and 1921, as the United States struggled to maintain its neutrality, helped defeat the Central powers led by Germany, took part in the peace process (never joining the League of Nations, however, and witnessed the return of Republican dominance, especially on the national level, “Al” Leonard remained the sole proprietor of Bridgewater’s Broad Street market. And, despite competition from fourteen other groceries of varying sizes by 1915, Leonard’s remained one of the town’s most popular markets, continuing to be “noted for the choice quality of meats and the freshness and variety of its fruits and vegetables.” To what extent his business slowed during 1917-1918 as the United States became a participant in the Great War and its citizens were urged to cut down on their purchase of such products as sugar, wheat, and meat is difficult to assess. What is obvious, however, is the intensified pace of this Broad Street market’s advertising between 1919 and 1921. An ad in the *Independent* of April 23, 1920, captured the tenor of many others when it suggested shoppers “go to Leonard’s for Dependable Goods in Meats, Provisions and Groceries. You are sure of prompt delivery if you order by phone.” A comment appearing under a photo appearing in the Bridgewater Book around 1918, reads: “He [Leonard] operates two auto delivery trucks, one for the rural districts, which carries to your door everything the market affords. Telephone orders given prompt attention,” and added that the “market is noted for its up-to-date equipment, its sanitary conditions, and the courtesy of its salesmen.” Leonard’s newspaper item of November 12, 1920 entitled “How to Solve the High Cost of Living” is also worth mentioning since it again illustrates his penchant for referring to public issues. In 1919-1920, the “HCL,” along with other matters such as the so-called Red Scare and labor strikes, was much on the minds of most Americans, with prices “more than doubling between 1915 and 1920.”<sup>88</sup>

Many of Leonard’s patrons, having been assured on July 8, 1921, by this “Dependable Store” of carrying only “quality goods,” including “the Famous Paul Revere Beets,” were most likely more than surprised by a brief item found in the *Independent* a week later. Its opening sentence succinctly read: “One of the most important changes in business which had taken place in town for some time occurred last Thursday when B. Alfred Leonard sold his market and grocery store to John [probably meant Jacob] Goldman of Boston.” After presenting a cursory historical account of the market and praising its “high reputation,” the article ended by telling the Bridgewater public: “Mr. Leonard has no plans for the future. He left today for the White Mountains and will take a thorough rest.” Probably writing from this New Hampshire location a short time later, Leonard asked in a note carried by the *Independent* that all unpaid payments owed to him prior to July 8 be sent to his house at 400 Main Street in Bridgewater. He closed by thanking shoppers in Bridgewater and “joining districts” for “their liberal patronage

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<sup>88</sup>BI, Dec. 31, 1915, Jan. 24, 1919, April 23, July 9, 30, Oct. 19, Nov. 12, 1920, May 15, 1925; Massachusetts Census, 1915, pp. 46, 196; Bridgewater Book; William E. Leuchtenburg, General Editor, The Unfinished Century: America Since 1900 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), p. 261.

and good will during the last 20 years....” Keeping the name Leonard’s, Goldman was the market’s proprietor until he sold it to a Mr. Brown of East Bridgewater in November of 1922. George Bump, well known in the market business, became Brown’s associate.<sup>89</sup>

### Faxon’s Store

Between 1910 and late 1919, Charles W. Faxon was the successful proprietor of Bridgewater’s Central Square Candy Store which, along with several other establishments, including Cole’s and Casey’s, did its best to satisfy the sweet tooth of many townfolk. Faxon’s, as it was generally called, was located at 21 Central Square, placing it at the northeastern end of the so-called Keith block which faced the northwestern side of the Bridgewater Common. This property derived its name from Mitchell Keith who was appointed on October 24, 1816, as the first postmaster of Bridgewater’s South Parish. When this political entity became present-day Bridgewater several years later, he continued to serve in this capacity until 1831, at which time Nahum Keith was appointed to this federal position. At first, the town’s postal service might have been conducted in the Keith House at the southern end of this property, where Odd Fellows’ building now stands. For a good part of the nineteenth century, however, postal affairs were conducted, often by other members of the Keith family, in “a small wooden” structure at the end of the Keith Block abutting the Bank Building. This arrangement came to an end in 1888, when fire caused extensive damage to the post office and several small commercial enterprises comprising the Keith property. After temporarily moving operations to the Mitchell building on the eastern side of Central Square, Postmaster Lemuel Keith in July 1890 was “instructed to remove the post office ...to a room in the Saving Bank Building ....” creating space for an additional commercial endeavor in the Keith Block. At the turn of the century, C. Everett White was successfully running the Central Square Candy Store in this premise. Ten years later, Faxon became the proprietor of this small but thriving business, and for nine years paid rent to the Keith family, which continued to own this valuable commercial block until 1924.<sup>90</sup>

While hardly a major retail enterprise in Central Square during the second decade of the new century, Faxon’s evidently did a steady business owing to its favorable location and addition of new products and services. Its early newspaper ads shrewdly urged folks to “drop in” when visiting the post office, “waiting for a car [trolley]”

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<sup>89</sup>BI, July 8, 15, 22, 29, Aug. 5, 12, Sept. 9, 16, 30, 1921, Jan. 6, May 26, June 16, Nov. 10, 1922.

<sup>90</sup>BI, Oct. 17, 1885, Oct. 29, 1887, May 26, June 9, 16, 1888, May 10, 24, 1890, Dec. 11, 1896, Nov. 16, Dec. 21, 1900, Oct. 16, 1903, June 3, 1904, Dec. 22, 1905, June 14, 1907, July 15, 1910, Feb. 22, June 6, 1924; “Move to Larger Place,” BI, August 8, 1957; Mrs. E. B. Hull, “Bridgewater in 1835,” HH, p. 216; Townscape Institute, Form 43, pp. 149-150, Form 44, pp. 151-152, Form 45, p. 153; Spence, “Bridgewater Post Office,” Descriptions of Sites in Bridgewater, Item 49, Revisions May 25, 2003; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 19-24; HH, pp. 140, 180, 217, 227; Tales Around the Common, p. 10; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 52; this latter source corrects the chronology of the same picture found on page 28 in the 1994 Pictorial History of Bridgewater; references to Mitchell Keith in Crane’s history of Bridgewater and in a selection of records of Bridgewater’s First Parish church, edited by Dorothy L. Mann and Anne H. Bates, would be a good starting point for writing a substantial essay on this important figure in Bridgewater during the first half of the nineteenth century; the old Keith House, which had been bought by Thomas W. Crocker in the late 1860’s, was moved in the late nineteenth century to the rear of the Bank Building to make room for the construction of Odd Fellows’ Block.

or tending to business at the Bridgewater Savings Bank. Indicative of the growing use of automobiles for public service, Faxon's location evidently induced W. B. McCrellis in the summer of 1916 to use "a stand in front of ... the Central Square Candy store... "for a public service auto car;" the town's first "taxi plan" service had been established a year earlier by the Bridgewater Inn Garage on the eastern side of the Square. Faxon's certainly benefited from being in the heart of the village center where most townspeople did the bulk of their everyday shopping and from increased business during holiday seasons associated with Christmas and Easter. Charles W. Faxon might have been standing in front of his store on July 4, 1913, waiting to see his "team" taking part in a parade of unparalleled "magnitude" in the town's history. Remaining open on that "Glorious Fourth," Faxon's promised "to meet all demands for ice cream cones and soda" and, in addition, invited patrons to "drop in and rest and refresh yourselves between events." I'm sure this enterprise, along with Hayes's ice cream parlor on the eastern side of the Square, did a brisk business on those Thursday summer evenings when many folks from Bridgewater and surrounding town's gathered to hear the memorable band concerts on the Common under the direction M. Clifton Edson. If shoppers generally found Faxon's location convenient enough, this was not entirely the case for its proprietor. Faxon and his family first lived in a house on Union Street, allowing him to walk to his store in a relatively short time. In April 1911, however, Faxon "removed" his family to a house on Park Avenue, a thoroughfare east of and somewhat farther from Central Square. He and his family, I suspect, were happy to reoccupy the Union Street house in May of 1913.<sup>91</sup>

As important as location was to Faxon's enterprise, his entrepreneurial skill of combining traditional offerings of the Central Square Candy Store with new services and products was the main key to his success. During the better part of his first year as proprietor, the store's ads, true to its name, mainly highlighted "candies and confectionery," such as mouth-watering "Bon Bons," boxes of chocolates, "little sweets," "creamery caramels" and "lolly-pop sticks." What Hal Goodnough remembered was "Faxon's Penny Candy." (Unlike Casey's, Faxon's did not make its own candy.) An ad on August 19, while listing "ice cream, soda..., tobacco, and cigars, focused on what appears to be the enterprise's first major attempt to increase its patronage. After highlighting the word "NOVELS!" the public was informed of the store's decision "to put in a line of popular novels at popular prices," adding "You will find what you want among them." Many years later, Louise Dickinson Rich, an inveterate reader at an early age, relates in her *Innocence Under the Elms* how she visited "Faxon's little stationery store up on Central Square" and surreptitiously perused a novel which her mother had told her "was not fit for a young girl to read." On a more serious note, this store expanded its offerings in the next several years to include the latest novels by "leading writers" and numerous magazines; the *Independent* on October 6, 1911, reminded its readers, for instance, that Faxon's carried the *American Magazine* which had begun printing installments of the autobiography of Wisconsin Senator Robert M. LaFollette, a progressive Republican who had some support in Bridgewater for

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<sup>91</sup>BI, March 28, April 14, Oct. 20, 1911, Jan. 19, 1912, March 28, June 20, July 4, 25, 1913, Aug. 21, 1914, Nov. 26, 1915, Aug. 11, 1916; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater; Mrs. E. B. Hull, "Bridgewater in 1835," p. 217; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 58-59, see these pages for a discussion of Hayes's between 1901 and 1910;



his 1912 presidential aspirations. In January 1914, referring to the store's business dealings with reading material, Faxon could boast: "This department has long since proven popular." <sup>92</sup>

In addition to its most popular products, Faxon's appealed to a broad spectrum of townspeople by a number of innovations during its years of operations. Briefly discussing them in chronological order might shed light on why what we later called "variety" stores were so popular in many of the nation's small towns and even cities. As "oppressive weather" of July 1911 set in, some Bridgewater folks, few of whom had electric fans and none air-conditioned homes, could not resist occasionally visiting Faxon's for an "ice cold and sparkling" drink at its "soda fountain." Two months later, some patrons found pleasure in collecting coupons "with every sale according to purchase," hoping soon to have the required number to exchange for pieces of "Beautiful Colonial Glassware." In 1913, while hardly the town's first commercial enterprise to do so, Faxon's could now be reached by telephone (8059), making it convenient for readers to place book and magazine orders. Undoubtedly well-received by Bridgewater's boys and young men in March of 1914 was the following announcement from Faxon's: "We have recently added a complete line of Baseball Goods and like all products handled at this store, they are the best the market affords." During that year's yuletide a Faxon's ad referred to the store as: "an Inexpensive Place to Buy a Christmas Present," including a "wide variety of Confectionery at all prices, --Magazines, Cigars, Tobacco, Pipes, etc." Perhaps readers who could not afford to purchase books or lacked space to add to their library read with great interest the following highlighted note at the bottom of this ad: "Our New Circulating Library Surely Contains Books You Haven't Read." Faxon's seems to have made a special effort to garner the patronage of Bridgewater's younger men from 1915 to early 1917. Evidently referring to the ever-intensifying European conflict, its ad of April 9, 1915, was entitled: "We Got the Fight News," adding that, among other products, the store offered a "good smoke." Thanks evidently to a telephone call on Columbus Day in that year from one "of a large number of [Bridgewater] baseball fans who journeyed to Boston's Fenway Park to attend "the Red Sox-Philadelphia game in the world series," sports enthusiasts gathered at Faxon's heard the results "a few minutes" after the game finished. Thanks to the research done by Sylvia B. Larson, the fine editor of all my essays, and her cousin Ken Butler, an expert on the history of baseball, I am happy to report that the Red Sox not only won this game, but also went on to win the World Series. In the February 1916, about three weeks after President Woodrow Wilson began coupling his policy of remaining neutral in the Great War with his call for preparedness, some Bridgewater men surely found Faxon's following suggestion appealing and soothing: "...if you don't have a fire of your own, drop in and enjoy the evening here. We can furnish you with the very best in smokes and the latest in sporting gossip." By this time the store carried "Virtuola, the Best Five Cent Cigar Made." <sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup>BI, Jan. 2, Feb. 25, April 8, May 20, July 8, Aug. 19, 1910, Jan. 6, Feb. 24, Aug. 11, Oct. 6, 1911, Jan. 5, March 15, May 17, 1912, June 20, Sept. 5, Oct. 10, 24, 1913, Jan. 16, April 14, Oct. 2, 1914, Nov. 12, 1915; Dickinson Rich, Innocence Under the Elms, pp. 173-174 (perhaps I should remind my readers that Louise was the elder daughter of James H. Dickinson, long-time editor of the *Bridgewater Independent*;) Goodnough, "Bridgewater About 1910," HH, p. 233.

<sup>93</sup>BI, July 14, Sept. 8, 1911, March 27, April 3, 10, Dec. 18, 1914, Jan. 29, April 9, Oct. 15, 1915, Feb. 19, May 19, 1916; Encyclopedia of American History : Bicentennial Edition, Edited by Richard B. and Jeffrey B. Morris

Before leaving this discussion of Faxon's between 1910 and 1916, three other happenings are worth noting. The first reminded folks in Bridgewater of the ever-present danger of fire in Central Square where wooden structures dominated. On August 10, 1914, (I cannot help mentioning this was shortly after Europe plunged into the greatest war humankind had yet faced) Faxon, "glancing out of a back window" of his store, noticed smoke pouring out of the windows of the basement of Odd Fellows' block which [joined] the Keith building...." Inevitably having "visions of another conflagration in the block," which eight months earlier had damaged the businesses of Locke and Washburn, Faxon's immediate thought was "to sound" a nearby fire alarm. Just in the nick of time, however, this building's janitor arrived to tell Faxon and a few customers that the billows of smoke had entered the cellar when some trash had been burned in a heater connected to a clogged chimney which had "not been used for a long time." A second happening later in the year reminded town citizens that even small retailers in Central Square could be targets of robbery. On October 27, the Superior court, which was in session in Plymouth, sentenced a man to five months in the house of correction for "breaking and entering the store of Charles Faxon." A third happening was of a personal nature. In brief announcement on November 17, 1916, the *Independent* reported: "C. W. Faxon received word the latter part of the week of the death of his father, for many years an esteemed resident of Holbrook."<sup>94</sup>

Despite President Wilson's desire to remain neutral in the Great War, events in early 1917 dashed hopes that this policy could be maintained. Even before the United States declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, Bridgewater's Annual Town Meeting in March by a "rising vote "" unanimously had expressed its "approval of any action which may be taken for the maintenance of the right of American citizens to travel on land and sea without ...hindrance from any nation." Along with most citizens of the town, Faxon evidently felt the United States was justified in entering what would become known as World War One. He was not the only commercial or industrial entrepreneur in Bridgewater, however, who also sensed their business might benefit from the conflict. A Faxon ad carried by the *Independent* on April 13, for example, read as follows: "Surely one thousand men and boys will show their patriotism in Sunday's parade. A majority of that number will show their good taste when they buy Confectionery, Soda and Cigars at this store."<sup>95</sup>

Returning from "his vacation" in September 1917, Faxon indicated he was "ready again to serve the boys [some of whom had already volunteered or been conscripted to serve in America's armed forces] with a nice cold

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(New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1976), p. 326; World Almanac -Book of Facts 2016, "World Series Results 1903-2016 (New York: World Almanac Books, 2016)), p. 931; Baseball Encyclopedia, 10<sup>th</sup> ed', revised & expanded, p. 2,845(Macmillan Books).

<sup>94</sup>BI, May 1, Aug. 14, Oct. 30, 1914, Nov. 17, 1916; William Thomas Davis, History of the Judiciary of Massachusetts: Including the Plymouth and Massachusetts Colonies. The Province of the Massachusetts Bay, and the Commonwealth (Boston: The Boston Book Company, 1900), p. 244; Dalton, Leading the Way, p. 117; the Court of Common Pleas was replaced by the Superior Court on April 5, 1859, and consisted of a "chief justice and nine associate justices;" it held sessions on established dates in counties across the state; it is my hope one day to write about the state's judicial system between 1821 to 1925, to accompany my two studies covering the years from 1656 to 1821.

<sup>95</sup>BI, March 16, April 13, 1917; "261<sup>st</sup> Annual Report of the Town Officers of the Town of Bridgewater," Annual Town Report, 1917 (Bridgewater, Mass: A. H. Willis, Printer, 1918), pp. 15-16.

drink of Soda, and a Smoke from our great big assortment of Pipes, Cigars, Cigarettes, and Tobacco....” The store, aware of its broader patronage, continued to remind the public of its “Fine Confectionery” and varied “Reading Matter,” including the “Latest Magazines.” During 1918, as America’s role in the European War intensified, Faxon’s made a special effort to garner the patronage of the town’s men and older boys, illustrated by the following ad on February 8: “Some Stores Open Mornings-We are Open Evenings.” Seeing this decision as the store’s “bit toward the success of program of the Fuel Administration” to conserve fuel, its proprietor went on to urge patrons to “drop around after supper for your evening smoke and exchange gossip,” and “buy tobacco for that soldier lad.” Mirroring a nationwide trend, Faxon’s ads in 1918 began to mention cigarettes more frequently as one of their tobacco offerings. By the spring of 1919, one of its ads was entitled “Cigarettes and Tobacco,” lending credence in a small way to the following conclusion of one historian: “By the 1920’s annual per capita consumption of cigarettes in the United States approached one thousand, and advertisers began targeting women. The cigarette age had arrived.” I doubt, however, Charles Faxon, proprietor of one of the smaller stores in Bridgewater’s Central Square, thought in such sweeping terms or that women of the town were flocking to his establishment to purchase a pack of cigarettes. In any case, these issues became academic for him in September of 1919 when the “Central Square Candy Store...passed into the hands” of a new proprietor, Larry Bove. By the time the descendants of Mitchell Keith sold their block in 1924 to Charles J. Jordan, however, this part of the property was occupied by “Blanchard’s Confectionary Store.”<sup>96</sup>

### **Callahan and Flynn Block**

**And**

### **Virginia Block**

Several retail enterprises were established on Broad Street between Central Square and the train depot about five years before the United States entered the Great War. Before focusing on them it would be helpful to discuss two new buildings which “met the demand for the time being” of much needed additional commercial space. The genesis of the smaller one goes back to August of 1910. At this time, John E. Flynn and James R. Callahan, in a “deal made by J. R. Callahan Co. agency real estate,” bought “a valuable piece of property on [the eastern side] of Broad Street...owned by the Gilbert family for considerably over 100 years.” In February 1912 the new owners after having had two large elms “cut down” on their newly acquired property proposed using the site for a business block. In May, however, town assessors did not expect “any appreciable increase in taxable property” for the coming year. But in late August, folks read of “Two New Blocks,” about to be built on Broad Street. In fact, work had begun on the Flynn-Callahan building, while it was averred that the erection of the other much larger block on the corner of Main and Broad streets would start “as soon as some minor formalities were disposed of.” Flynn and Callahan chose Charles T. Olson of Brockton as their building’s architect and builder, charging him with completing by December 1 a one-story brick structure on a “cement foundation, 60 by 63.” This

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<sup>96</sup>BI, Sept. 14, 1917, Feb. 8, March 8, 29, April 19, July 12, Oct. 18, Dec 20, 1918, Feb. 21, March 14, Sept. 12, Oct. 19, Dec. 26. 1919, Jan. 2, 30, Feb. 6, 1920, June 6, 1924; HH, p. 227; John M. Hemphill, “Tobacco,” Reader’s Companion to American History, eds. Eric Foner and John A. Garraty, pp. 1079-1080.

space would provide accommodations for three stores which would be “wired for electricity . . . piped for gas,” and “heated by steam.” The entire front of the block would be of “plate glass,” providing passersby, including those riding the trolley shuttle between Central Square and the railroad depot, glimpses of merchandise being offered. The completion deadline was not met, but premises began to be occupied in the spring of 1913. Both this new commercial property and its next-door neighbor to the south, the newly built Princess Theater (later named the Capital Theater) also erected on land owned by Flynn and Callahan, benefited from Superintendent of Streets Robert J. McNeeland’s decision in May of that year to put “a cement curbing” in front of both establishments. I can only speculate on how the patronage of either was impacted by the town’s decision in 1916 “to enter into a contract with the [state] highway commission for the construction of [a] state highway on Broad Street from the East Bridgewater line to Bridgewater center.” The *Independent* left no doubt where it stood on this matter. On February 18, it carried the following statement: “Broad street is one of the main thoroughfares of the town, being an artery of communication with the railroad and most of the manufacturing industries of the place as well as growing each year in importance in a business way . . .”<sup>97</sup>

In early September 1912, “final papers” were signed for the construction of the “much-talked” about larger block on the corner of Main and Broad Streets near Bridgewater’s Central Square. The history of this land and its owners could easily be the subject of a lengthy essay. My comments, however, are limited to a brief overview of how this valuable real estate became the site of one of Bridgewater’s most impressive multi-purpose complexes during its short history of twelve years. Before Caleb Cary Gilbert suddenly died from pneumonia at the age of 90 in Boston’s Hotel Brunswick on December 24, 1893, he had owned his family’s estate in Bridgewater for many years. This included land on both sides of Broad Street and along the north side of Main Street extending some distance from Central Square. Even though he “was engaged in business in New Bedford” for some time and subsequently became a resident of Boston, he made frequent visits to the family homestead (called by some the “long white house”), built by his father Nathaniel on the corner of Main and Broad Streets. These two thoroughfares were officially designated as such in the middle of the nineteenth century. Gilbert paid property taxes (as would his heirs into the early twentieth century), adding considerably to the town’s coffers. As he grew older, Gilbert must have reminisced a great deal about his family roots, especially remembering that his mother Betsy D. was the daughter Caleb Cary, a scion of a family long associated with the history of Bridgewater; indeed, John Cary had served as the town’s first clerk between 1656 and 1681. In his later years, Gilbert also continued his visits to his native town, where older folks still remembered his interest and contributions to the building of the new Academy

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<sup>97</sup>BI, Aug. 19, 1910, March 1, May 10, Aug. 30, Sept. 13, Oct. 11, Dec. 6, 13, 1912, May 9, Sept. 26, 1913, Feb. 6, 1914, Feb. 18, March 10, Sept. 1, 1916, April 2, 1920; Dickinson Rich, *Innocence Under the Elms*, pp. 121-127, 169-171, 237; this last source presents a somewhat unflattering picture of the eastern side of Broad Street between Central Square and the “Dec-po,” describing it as “a solid block of rather ramshackle stores and other business buildings, looking somewhat like a western boom-town, minus the saloons and hitching rails;” Moore, *Images of America: Bridgewater*, p. 87; *Tales Around the Common*, p. 10; while I need to make more inquiries on this matter, I suspect parts of the original Flynn-Callahan building is still extant, but its brick exterior has been covered by a newer form of siding; the Dickinson family rented several houses in Bridgewater, one being next to “The Cloverdale,” a store occupying space in the Flynn-Callahan block.

building in 1868 and the “new edifice of Trinity [Episcopal] Church in 1884.” His offer “to present a valuable lot for the building” of a public library was evidently appreciated, but in 1881 the town chose land on South Street, not far from the southern end of the Common. Despite being the oldest of eleven siblings, nine brothers and two sisters, he lived the longest, retaining his “faculties” until a few hours before succumbing to pneumonia. After his funeral services at the hotel, his “remains were interred in the family lot at Bridgewater’s Mt. Prospect Cemetery.” The corner of Broad and Main Streets remained part of the family estate for thirteen years after Caleb’s death; the family house, which was shingled in 1904, most likely had become a rental property. This situation would change following the death of his widow the following year.<sup>98</sup>

In early August of 1906 J. R. Callahan & Co. was put in charge of selling forthwith this part of the Gilbert estate, long-considered “to be one of the most valuable pieces of real estate” in Bridgewater. A sale was not made until a year later, however. The purchaser was J. Gardner Bassett, a native of Bridgewater who had been educated in town schools and the Normal School. By the early 1900’s, he was a respected business man, contributing to the town’s economic life by establishing the Bridgewater Brick Company and by playing roles in the founding of the Commercial Club, an organization of businessmen, and the Bridgewater Co-operative Bank. In 1896, 1899, and 1900, he served on the Parish or Standing Committee of the Unitarian Church which “carried on the Parish business.” Refusing to comment on speculations by others that he was considering erecting “a business block on the corner, with an apartment house on the Main Street side,” Bassett simply replied his plans on this matter had not yet matured. After “considerable persuasion,” he did agree in late 1907 to serve once more as the Commercial Club’s president. He also generously offered to make improvements in the first floor of the Gilbert House to provide a far more luxurious setting for this organization than its original quarters in the Elwell block on the eastern side of Central Square. The view from the new meeting place was enhanced by Bassett’s decision “to remove the pine trees” encircling the Gilbert House. Due to the waning fortunes of the Commercial Club beginning in 1909, however, he had the Gilbert homestead made into a two-tenement house.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup>BI, Sept. 11, 1891, Dec. 30, 1893, Nov. 3, 1894, Sept. 25, 1896, Aug. 22, 1902, April 8, 1904, Dec. 15, 1905, Aug. 10, 1906, Sept. 6, 1912; Crane. p.774; Nahum Mitchell, History of the Early Settlement of Bridgewater, p. 171; Mrs. E. B. Hull “Letter” written about 1908, HH, p. 217; “Accepted Streets,” Town of Bridgewater, pp. 3, 9; Theodore F. Wright, “The Memorial Library,” Bridgewater Book, pp.29-28; Marjorie W. Paulson, “History of the Bridgewater Public Library,” HH, pp. 123-124; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, pp. 86-87; this latter source provides two pictures of the Gilbert estate before it became the site of the Keith Block in 1913 (later renamed the Virginia Block ); Spence, Education in Bridgewater, Massachusetts to 1910, pp. 11-13, Churches in Bridgewater, Massachusetts to 1910, p. 5; in “recognition” of her husband’s interest in Bridgewater’s public library, Mrs. Gilbert left five thousands dollars to that institution , “the income” to be used “for the purchase of books.”

<sup>99</sup>BI, April 26, 1901, April 3, 1903, Aug. 10, 1906, Sept. 13, Nov. 8, 15, Dec. 6, 1907, Jan. 3, Feb. 14, 1908, Dec. 3, 1909, Dec. 3, 1915; The First Parish Unitarian Church Bridgewater, Massachusetts: “An accounting of its history as revealed by its records,” Written, Compiled, Edited by Dorothy L. Mann and Anne H. Bates (Published By Bridgewater-Raynham Graphic Arts Department, Bridgewater, Massachusetts, 1976), pp. 23-26; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 99; again, thanks to this source for providing the best photograph of the Gilbert House before it was torn down several decades into the twentieth century; Spence, Manufacturing in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 64-66, History of the Parker-Gates-Shaw House to 1925, p. 31, Churches in Bridgewater to 1910, p. 30.

By 1912 Bassett was considered one of the town's "leading citizens," noted for his civic work, including his chairmanship of the school board and commitment to enhancing the town's economic growth, most notably by playing a role "in inducing the L. Q. White Shoe Co. to locate in Bridgewater," resulting in what became the town's largest industry. During the five years following his purchase of the Gilbert estate, however, he had not taken the initiative in the building of a commercial-residential block on this valuable property. Most likely his numerous other contributions to his native town and his many years as the master of the Bigelow School in South Boston allowed him limited time to undertake this building project. Indicative of his hope that such an edifice grace this corner prompted him to sell this property for that purpose, once it had been surveyed to clearly "establish the street lines ...." <sup>100</sup>

In late spring of 1912, Bassett, most likely using the real estate services of J. R. Callahan & Co., sold the major portion of this corner lot to Mr. and Mrs. Clarence L. Keith, but retained the "barn at the old Gilbert place," and in 1914 "remodeled [it] into a tenement." The new owners, "subject to a mortgage of \$20,000 to the Exchange Trust Co. of Boston," moved quickly to begin construction of the proposed block by awarding the contract to William L. Borden of Fall River, one of the Bay State's leading cities. That Keith apparently had previously been "instrumental in building some of the houses on Clarence Avenue (a town way known as Keith Avenue until 1911) would suggest that he planned to be much engaged in this new building project. Work started in September, with plans calling for "a building 50x128 feet, three stories high and constructed of brick, with all the modern improvements." Indicative of the structure's large size, at least by Bridgewater's standards, the first floor would accommodate six stores, the second eight offices and two tenement suites, and the third five tenement suites. Early in October, however, "shovelers who had been at work on the excavation for the cellar of the new block" went on strike, calling for an "eight-hour day or an increase of twenty-cents a day." These modest demands were not met and "another gang" was soon at work. About two weeks later, one "prominent citizen," watching the excavations continuing, confidently predicted the new block would join other building projects, including the Callahan-Flynn block, additions to L. Q. White Shoe factory on Spring Street, the garages of W. H. Bassett Co. on Main Street and the Bridgewater Inn in Central Square, and "many dwelling houses." It was estimated that these building projects would add between \$150,000 and \$200,000 to the town's tax base. Many townsfolk, including passers-by, trolley riders, and, especially, retired men who lived within walking distant of Central Square, most likely watched with keen interest as various parts of this new structure were added. Even before this new commercial-residential block was finished, most citizens were probably not surprised to hear in early December that it would be named in honor of Clarence L. Keith. <sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> BI, Aug. 12, 1910, July 28, 1911, May 3, 1912, May 8, Sept. 4, 1914, Dec. 3, 1915; "Town Officers for the Year 1904," Annual Town Report, 1904, pp. 5-6; Bassett served on the town's school board of six members for nine years, including six as its chairman; Spence, Manufacturing in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 44-47.

<sup>101</sup> BI, July 28, 1911, Aug. 30, Sept. 6, Oct. 11, 25, Nov. 15, 22, 29, Dec. 6, 1912, Jan. 24, 1913, April 18, 25, May 1, Aug. 14, Sept. 4, 1914, Dec. 3, 1915; at the age of sixty-four, Josiah Gardner Bassett passed away on November 28, 1915, with the funeral service held at his Summer Street home and his internment at Mount Prospect Cemetery; some young scholar might wish to write an article about his important contributions to

Before looking at four retailers who rented space in one or the other of the two new buildings on Broad Street in 1913 and would continue to do so into the following decade, a few comments are in order about what would prove to be the short history of the larger one on the corner of Broad and Main Streets. Based upon gleanings from the *Independent*, only a partial picture emerges concerning legal and financial matters surrounding the building's ownership in its first year. (Research at the Plymouth Registry of Deeds might throw further light on this matter.) Evidently after March 3, 1913, the Keiths no longer owned this corner lot and the almost completed commercial-residential structure; although for another year at least, it often continued to be referred to by their name. When the block was ready for occupancy in the first week of May, it was "pronounced to be a fine work piece of work" by the *Independent*. But a controversy over ownership soon emerged between William L. Borden, the builder of the Keith Block, and Henry G. Prophett, a well-known citizen of Bridgewater, aptly described as a "real estate speculator/builder/metal shingle dealer." By early August, Prophett, feeling confident of gaining legal control of this property, continued to rent premises in the block, including those for a five and ten cent store, a market, "dental parlors," and living quarters for folks who relished the idea of a modern tenement in the town's center. The legal question of who owned this new and valuable commercial block is further complicated by the public listing of "Heavy Tax Payers" covering the period from Aug. 1913 to August 1914. According to this list William A. Borden (I'm assuming the middle initial should have been L.) paid \$748.00 in town property taxes as a non-resident. Henry D. Prophett paid \$547.36 in taxes, a figure that would have had to include assessments on his other properties, especially his impressive Queen Anne's residence at 127 Bedford Street. It should be noted that litigation over the 1913 sale of this property did not end until late April 1917, when the case of Borden against Prophett was adjudicated to the satisfaction of both men by the Superior Court then sitting in Fall River; many folks in Bridgewater at this time most likely were taking more note of America's entry into the Great War three weeks earlier.<sup>102</sup>

Despite the legal dispute between Borden and Prophett, premises in Bridgewater's largest block continued to appeal to commercial businesses, service providers, and tenants looking for up-to-date living quarters. And, until the beginning of 1924, a succession of new owners evidently deemed it a good investment. In a brief announcement on May 1, 1914, the *Independent* without embellishment simply reported that the "Keith block at the corner of Main and Broad streets has been sold to Allen McPherson of New York;" later newspaper ads cited him as "Allan McPherson], Proprietor and Manager." It appears that it was not until the fall, however, that the Keith block began to be known as "The Virginia," a building offering "Choice Elevated Apartments" on its second and third floors. Among the "ADVANTAGES WHICH THE BUILDING AFFORDS," boasted its new owner,

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Bridgewater in the early 1900's; Moore, *Images of America: Bridgewater*, pp. 69-70; *The Townscape Institute*, Form 246, pp. 567-568; *Tales Around the Common: Bridgewater, Massachusetts*, Edited by Dorothy Lord Mann, Arthur C. Lord, and J. Kenneth Moore, p. 8; this last source reminds me once again of the valuable work done by "The Bridgewater Historical Collectors in the last two decades of the twentieth century; "Accepted Streets," *Town of Bridgewater*, p. 3;

<sup>102</sup>*BI*, May 16, 30, Sept. 26, Aug. 29, Sept. 26, Oct. 3, 17, 31, Dec. 26, 1913, May 1, Aug. 14, 1914, April 27, 1917; *Townscape Institute*, Form 19, p. 97; Dalton, Ed., Wirkkala, Thomas, Dobbins, Illustrator, *Leading the Way: A History of the Massachusetts General Court, 1629-1980*, p. 117.

were “A Physician and Surgeon-Dr. E. V. Whelan, Drug Store, Provision Store, Hardware Store, Florist, Billiard, Pool and Bowling Alleys.” In addition, those renting apartments surely must have found it convenient to have “a waiting room on the first floor for passengers of the electric street railway.” By early the following year, folks in Bridgewater and surrounding areas began to patronize “The Virginia Café.” Run by Mrs. Frannie Ward, some folks averred it to be “A First-Class Modern Restaurant.” That a gas explosion in February of 1916 “blew off the oven door of the gas range” might have led some patrons to question the efficacy of modern appliances, however. In August of that year, McPherson as a non-resident received a local tax bill of \$924.00, placing him among the Large Payers. This payment, however, could not match those of the Bay State Street Railway, Stanley Works, and L. Q. White, among the largest contributors to the town’s coffers. Undoubtedly, the rents charged to the occupants of the Virginia Building helped defray this levy on the block’s new owner.<sup>103</sup>

Based upon the tax-payers list on August 30, 1918, covering the previous year, it appears that in 1917 McPherson sold the Virginia Building to Frank Ferdinand of Boston. For the next four years, his name appeared on the short list of non-resident property owners paying town taxes. That Ferdinand was the latest owner of Bridgewater’s largest block is supported by the fact that his taxes were generally comparable to those of his predecessor. I do not know how often Ferdinand came to inspect his newly acquired commercial-residential block. I assume, however, he made the thirty-mile journey after a fire in November 1918 resulted in “at least \$2,000” worth of damage, largely caused by water dripping down” to the street floor, where the “Edison Electric Light Company and the Brockton Gas Company” had rented space. Not as threatening as some earlier fires in Bridgewater (and, indeed, some later ones), this “stubborn fire” most likely would have drawn a larger crowd of spectators had not the town been experiencing the tail end of the deadly influenza epidemic. By early October of 1921, the ownership of the Virginia block changed once more when Ferdinand, evidently plagued by changes in the building’s occupancy, sold this valuable property to Morris Silverstein of Boston early in October of 1921 for a price “not far from \$50,000.” The *Independent* categorized this real estate transaction as one of “considerable magnitude.” That the tenancy issue continued to be problematic in 1922 is evidenced by the decision of the Edison Electric Illuminating Co. to vacate its quarters in the Virginia block and remove to 31 Main Street where it would occupy the room at the right of the entrance to the W. H. Bassett Co. Garage. In late August of that year it was reported that John Arnold of Worcester became the next owner of this Virginia building, paying “in the vicinity of \$50,000” for this 10-year old commercial-apartment rental property. (If and when I write separate essays on Bridgewater in the 1920’s, I will more fully discuss the conflagration of January 24, 1924, that destroyed the Virginia Building, which reportedly at this time was owned by Benjamin Bennett of Hanover Street, Boston, and how it was immediately replaced by the far less-attractive structure which continues to occupy the corner of Main and Broad Streets. One last musing: While the fire threat to wooden buildings in and around Bridgewater’s center remained a constant concern between the 1880’s and the 1920’s, the most devastating conflagrations occurred in

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<sup>103</sup> BI, May 16, Aug. 8, 1913, May 1, Oct. 2, 16, Nov. 13, 27, 1914, Jan. 15, 29, Nov. 26, Dec. 10, 1915, Feb. 25, Aug. 18, March 31, 1916; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 69; The Bridgewater Historical Collectors, Pictorial History: Bridgewater, Massachusetts, 1994, p. 17.



the beginning and end of 1924, resulting in the ruin of important brick buildings, namely the Virginia Block and those making up the heart of the Normal School. <sup>104</sup>

### Dudley's Drug Store

From the late 1880's to 1913, folks in Bridgewater had the limited choice of patronizing Cole's and/or Wilcox's drug stores at the northeast or southwest corners of Central Square, respectively. Many shoppers, therefore, must have read with considerable interest the following notice in the *Independent* on May 16, 1913: "Watch for Dudley's Drug Store Opening." One week later, in an ad of considerable size, the H. H. Dudley and Co. formally announced, "to the people of Bridgewater and surrounding towns that they have established a new and completely modern Drug Store in the Keith Block, Corner Main and Broad Sts." A perusal of this ad clearly shows how drug stores had come a long way from the apothecary shops once frequented by the town's older inhabitants. I hasten to point out, however, that this new pharmacy continued to offer its patrons such questionable products as "Gibson's Blood and Nerve Purifier" or "Nyal's Kaltone, composed entirely of vegetable drugs, roots and barks, having tonic and alternate properties-\$1.00 Pint Bottle." The firm's offering of "Kreso Dip" as the "Strongest of all Disinfectants ...for Stables reminded folks that several hundred horses continued to play a role in the economic and social life of Bridgewater. Still, the up-to-date nature of this new store in a new block is captured vividly in this ad appearing the day before the grand opening: the "equipment of the store is modern in every particular, including an improved American soda fountain, tile floor, mahogany fittings, mirror-back wall cases, and the latest word in gas and electric lights. The most sanitary and approved methods for keeping drugs have been installed; also a cabinet for tobaccos, which regulates the heat and moisture, thus keeping them in proper condition." A longer list of advantages might have included the store's location on the convergence of trolley lines, certainly a convenience for the apartment dwellers of the Virginia block and patrons from some outlying parts of Bridgewater and nearby towns. If Casey's on the eastern side of Broad Street provided a waiting room for riders, so too did a similar facility in the Virginia building on the western side of this important thoroughfare. <sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>BI, Aug. 30, Nov. 22, 1918, Sept. 12, 1919, Aug. 20, 1920, Aug. 19, Oct. 7, 1921, Jan. 20, 27, Aug. 25, Oct. 6, 1922, Feb. 20, 1925; "Report of the Board of Health," Annual Town Report, 1918, pp. 125-126; this report estimated that the total number of influenza cases in Bridgewater, reported and unreported, could conservatively be set at 2,000; Herbert K. Pratt, The First Hundred Years; as Pratt points out, Frederick Waite, Bridgewater's Fire Chief between 1914 and 1937, "stated in his reports year after year, that in the event of a serious fire his department would be unable to cope with it," a prediction that was demonstrated by the blazes in 1924 mentioned above; in the following year the Town of Bridgewater "purchased the privately owned water system and rebuilt the same to conform to underwriters standards, at a cost of \$600,000;" Ken Moore, "A Look At the Past," Tales Around the Common, p. 14; Moore's account of the blaze that razed the Virginia Building reminds me once again of the town's debt to The Bridgewater Historical Collectors whose labors in the late twentieth century helped preserve much of the town's history; it is safe to say that no one in Bridgewater today has personal memories of the Virginia block and the fire which consumed it; while the two most destructive fires of 1924 destroyed buildings made of stone and brick, the threat to the wooden structures in Bridgewater's center remained, as evidence by a conflagration in February of the following year when stores and other business on the eastern side of the Square were badly damaged; older folks at this time remembered when this block was successively called the Mitchell, Elwell, and Bowman Block; at the time of the 1925 fire, this property was owned by "Messrs Swig and Glickman," neither citizens of Bridgewater.

<sup>105</sup>BI, May 16, 23, July 11, Dec. 5, 1913, March 13, 1914, March 16, 1917, May 3, 1918; Bridgewater Book;

Credit for what was characterized as an “important advance in Bridgewater’s mercantile history,” was given to Henry H. Dudley, a native of Windsor, Vermont, who about thirty years earlier had established a drug store in Brockton. Evidently success in this endeavor prompted him to open a branch in the much smaller community of Bridgewater. How he heard about what was still being called the new Keith block and with whom he negotiated the terms of renting the choice corner of that building I have yet to discover. His firm’s Bridgewater branch, whose official address was 22 Broad Street, proved to be successful and was followed later in the year by the opening of a similar commercial endeavor in nearby Whitman. Dudley, a bachelor “whose chief pleasure was attending the big-league ball games in Boston,” hired managers to run everyday operations of his three pharmacies. At the start of the 1913 Yule season, Ernest Carison, the first manager of the Bridgewater branch, was moved to the Whitman store and was replaced by George Walker. More research might reveal how often Dudley visited his stores in Bridgewater and Whitman to engage in a modicum of micro-management; if he was not an owner of an automobile, he could have easily taken advantage of the direct trolley and railroad connections between these communities and Brockton, a leading center of shoe manufacturing. Whatever his involvement in everyday activities of the firm’s branches, Dudley used the *Independent* on December 12, “to thank the people of Bridgewater and vicinity for their liberal patronage since I have been here.”<sup>106</sup>

It did not take long for Dudley’s to become an important part of Bridgewater’s configuration of retail businesses, but it would take some time before it achieved the veneration accorded to its long-established competitors Cole’s and Wilcox’s; the latter drug store was closed in May 1914 but was re-opened in August by one of its former clerks, Henry J. Carpenter. Understanding the need for name recognition Dudley’s new pharmacy participated in Bridgewater’s 1913 Fourth of July parade, reportedly the first time such an event had taken place since 1876. Along with most of the town’s leading retailers, Dudley’s Drug Store, using an “auto,” took part in a parade which “occupied 35 minutes in passing a given point.” Some townsfolk, having patronized the parent store in Brockton, knew of the Dudley firm even before a branch was established in Bridgewater. Whatever the competitive nature of the relationship between the town’s three drug stores, Cole’s, Carpenter’s, and Dudley’s from 1914 to 1918, the town’s growing population allowed all of them to carry on profitable businesses. Each of these commercial endeavors advertised in the *Independent* during those years, but Dudley’s seemed to do considerable more than its competitors, perhaps to garner more public attention and, thus, business. Consisting of three drug stores, this corporation was also able to offer a greater variety of products than its competitors. Shoppers at Christmas time could count on Dudley’s offering a plethora of “Practical Gifts, including a Crocker Ink-tite Fountain Pen,” made a dollar cheaper by turning in an “old” one. One wonders how many townsfolk who bought this self-filling pen knew that it was designed in 1895 by Seth Sears Crocker, a graduate of Bridgewater Normal

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Fiore, Wilson, Bridgewater State College: As we were...as we are, 1840-1976, p.95; the picture in this latter source clearly shows the meeting of trolleys at the corner of Main and Broad Streets where Dudley Drug Store was located; the Keith block on Broad Street should not be confused with the much older Keith block on the western side of Central Square.

<sup>106</sup>BI, Dec. 5, 12, 1913, May 3, 1918.

school. In 1902 his company began to manufacture this pen in Boston.<sup>107</sup>

While the history of Dudley's in Bridgewater from 1925 to early 1940's would constitute a section of another essay, a few comments about continuity and change in this drug store between 1918 and 1924, are in order. On May 3, 1918, town inhabitants read about the death of Henry H. Dudley on April 30, "after an illness of about a year." Compared to his competitor Orrin B. Cole, who would pass away in early September of the same year, Dudley was not well-known by many townsfolk; the arrival of half a million American soldiers in France, including some Bridgewater boys, most likely was of greater concern than the owner of Bridgewater's latest pharmacy. After funeral services in Brockton, Dudley was buried in the family lot in Windsor, Vermont. Having no children, it could be that his firm was passed on to his family of three brothers and two sisters. At any rate, the Bridgewater drug store was to continue operations under Dudley's name at least into the 1940's. George Walker remained the manager of this successful business into the early 1920's, most likely having more leeway in the running of the store, including its weekly newspaper ads and in hiring help. I do not know whether he was still in charge on August 16, 1922, when the stores on the first floor of the Virginia Block sustained water damaged caused by "someone" leaving the water running in a bathroom, most likely on the second floor. On a lighter note, he might have been one of the spectators who two months earlier had watch George Palley, dubbed "the human fly," climb "up the outside of the three-story Virginia Block and then [ride] a bicycle around the top of the parapet." Perhaps this feat reminded on-lookers of this building's claim of being Bridgewater's grandest commercial-apartment structure. During the 1922 and 1923 Christmas seasons Dudley's joined many other retailers in sponsoring a special shopping day at which time each merchant would be giving away some merchandise. The list of this drug store included a flash light, toilet set, vacuum bottle, and, not surprisingly, a Crocker fountain pen. Touting its ten years in Bridgewater, Dudley's surely looked forward to remaining in the choicest spot of the Virginia Building for many years to come. Little did its latest owner Benjamin Bennett, who hailed from Boston, have any inkling that his investment would be reduced to rubble by a catastrophic fire in late January of 1924. (Details of this conflagration, the scramble of occupying businesses to find new homes, the demolition of the burned-out structure, matters of new ownership, and the construction of a new block on this important commercial site will not be attempted here. Readers interested in these matters, may wish to consult articles in the *Independent*, including those found on February 8, 22, March 7, 14, 28, April 4, 18, May 9, and July 25, 1924.)<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup>"The Glorious Fourth: Parade, Sports, Fireworks, Make a Big Day for Bridgewater," *BI*, July 4, 1913; this long account is worth perusing since it cites many of the town's commercial and manufacturing businesses, civic and sport organizations, and town departments which contributed to the success of this celebration; *Massachusetts Census, 1915*, p. 85; *BI*, June 8, 1900, Feb. 8, 1901, May 23, Dec. 5, 12, 1913, Dec. 17, 1915, Dec. 15, 1916, Dec. 7, 1923, March 13, 1925; *Chilton-Fountain Pen: History*, <http://www.fountainpen.it/Chilton/en#History>.

<sup>108</sup>*BI*, May 3, 1918, June 16, Aug. 18, Dec. 8, 1922, Dec. 7, 1923, May 9, 1924; "Report of Committee on War Memorial: Records of Men Who Died in the Service," *Annual Town Report, 1921*, pp. 139-145; one of these soldiers was James Anthony Oliver, Jr. who lost his life "in the big drive in Belleau Wood, July 20, 1918," becoming "the first Bridgewater boy killed in action;" R. G. Grant, *Smithsonian World War I: The Definitive Visual History* (New York: Published by Darling Kindersley Limited, 2014), p. 285; Thomas P. Moran and The Highlights" Staff, *HH*, p. 136; a digital copy of *Campus Comment*, a student publication at Bridgewater State

A new phase of the H. H. Dudley Company's branch drug store in Bridgewater began within a week after its premise of eleven years in the Virginia Building was "burned out." Moving with dispatch, this still comparatively young store in town announced that it had "purchased the business of the Garrity Lunch" on the corner of Main Street and Central Square. This decision placed Dudley's new location directly across Main Street from its original site. After alterations and improvements had been made "to suit the business," the company opened again as a "first class drug store" in late March. Its first April ad emphasized the "Fresh Stock of Drugs or Medicine" and assured its patrons of filling prescriptions from any doctor. Realizing the need to stress its new location, the ad's headline read as follows: "DUDLEY'S DRUG STORE-Open at Simmons Corner." For many older townsfolk this ad undoubtedly conjured up memories of patronizing A. I. Simmons meat market on this "Busy Corner."<sup>109</sup>

#### R. E. Purnelle

About three months after Dudley opened his drug store in Bridgewater, Raymond. E. Purnelle of North Abington also rented space in the new Keith building to conduct a hardware business. A brief review of how he came to have the opportunity of moving into the town's prestigious new block on the corner of Main and Broad Streets is in order. After being part of the town's commercial life since the late 1860's, Jerome B. Rogers, first as a tinsmith and later as the owner and proprietor of a "hardware store," decided to retire in early 1912. (Readers might wish to consult my volume on stores and services in Bridgewater to 1910 for a summary of Rogers's long career.) By April the Bridgewater Hardware Co., under the leadership of Edgar F. Cushman, occupied quarters in the old wooden Rogers building located at 7 Broad Street to the northeast of Casey's store. Expecting to conduct a thriving enterprise, this new outfit closed "out the present stock" and replaced "it with new goods." Unfortunately, "some vandal" within a day used a knife to "cut great gashes in the woodwork" of a new "large show window" .... To increase patronage, the managers of this latest commercial endeavor announced their intention of offering "Great Bargains Every Friday." In late April, a time when showers begin to enliven the town's lawns, a number of homeowners read with interest an ad offering a "Standard New England Lawn Mower" marked down from "\$5 to \$2.75," with a refund if the mower proved "unsatisfactory." Rogers's immediate successor had a short stay in Bridgewater, however. In late September, Cushman announced he was selling his interest in the Bridgewater Hardware Co. to Joseph B. White of nearby Whitman. While carrying a great variety of hardware items, White's ads in the *Independent* put special emphasis on "Bridgeport Standard Paints" and, perhaps surprising to present-day shoppers, the "Crawford Range," a type of kitchen appliance no longer carried by small hardware stores. Until the end of May 1913, White, while continuing to carry on his business in the Rogers building, undoubtedly looked westward across Broad Street many times as the new three-story Keith block was under construction. He might have begun to envision what it would be like to move his hardware business to the

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Teachers College, Vol. 8, No.4, has some former students visiting Cole's and Dudley's on November 8, 1940; at the latter they stopped for a "Coke" and tried its new "Quickie Lunches;" Lord, "First Quarter of the Century in Bridgewater," *Tales Around the Common*, p. 49.

<sup>109</sup>BI, March 7, 28, April 4, Aug. 3, 1924; Moore, *Images of America: Bridgewater*, p. 68.

first floor of what would become one of the most impressive structures in Bridgewater. Whether or not he spent much time contemplating this matter, the *Independent* carried this four-line announcement on May 30: “J. B. White is removing his hardware store to its new quarters in the Keith Block. He will be ready for business the first of the week.” Alas, three months later, this newspaper informed folks in Bridgewater that White had sold his hardware store to Raymond E. Purnelle.”<sup>110</sup>

Hailing from Abington, a town not far north of Bridgewater, Purnelle joined many other commercial enterprises whose proprietors were not born and raised in this town. But unlike his next-door business neighbor Dudley, who was a bachelor and continued to live in Brockton, Purnelle, within a few weeks after opening his hardware store in September 1913 “removed his family from Abington to Porter Place” in Bridgewater. Most likely they occupied living quarters in a substantial house where this “roadway” and South Street converge. This location allowed him daily exercise by walking northeast along South Street and Central Square to his store in the new Keith building. For more than twenty years Purnelle had been connected with the hardware business, first “as a traveling salesman, both for manufacturers and for wholesale houses.” Just before occupying space at 22 Broad Street, he had managed the E. P. Reed Company in Abington. Bridgewater’s latest hardware retailer was soon advertising in the *Enterprise*, informing shoppers of his intention of selling “goods at the “LOWEST PRICES.” One of Purnelle’s early ads announced it was carrying “Hardware, Paints, Bicycles & Tools.” As folks began their Christmas shopping, the store, still describing itself as the “New Store in the New Block with New Goods,” announced its intention of holding a demonstration of “Everyones Vacuum Cleaner.” To present-day day shoppers, the price of \$4.50 would seem incredulous, but many Bridgewater’s wage earners, including those working in the town’s shoe factories, might have thought twice before making this purchase. At the end of December, Purnelle’s become “the exclusive agency in town for the Neponset Flexible shingles.” “The first lot” was “applied to a house on Burrill Avenue;” this thoroughfare became an “Accepted Street” in 1914 and is located off Plymouth Street, a short distance east of Central Square. Purnelle’s “little store” must have done fairly well during its first two years in Bridgewater, and thus could offer a delightful list of Christmas gifts for children. (The list on the following page might allow readers to compare and contrast what gifts children a century ago hoped to find under the Christmas tree with their counterparts in the digital age.)<sup>111</sup>

A year later Purnelle’s patrons might have been surprised at his decision to leave the Keith Block and move into “his new store on the other side of Broad Street.” (I now question my initial conclusion that he found more spacious accommodations in the relatively new Callahan-Flynn building and that an inside wall separated

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<sup>110</sup> BI, July 2, 1897, March 22, April 5, 12, 26, May 17, Sept. 27, 1912, March 28, April 4, 11, 18, May 2, 9, 16, 30, Aug. 29, 1913; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 26-27, 79-80.

<sup>111</sup> BI, Aug. 29, Sept. 12, Nov. 7, Dec. 5, 26, 1913, Dec. 11, 1914, Jan. 1, Dec. 31, 1915; “Accepted Streets, March 12, 1914, January 31, 1966,” Town of Bridgewater, p. 3; Townscape Institute, Form 193, p. 456; it is probable that the Purnelle first rented quarters in a large two-story dwelling built around 1845 and located on the corner of Porter Place and South Street, a short distance from where the latter thoroughfare meets Pleasant Street; historically known as the Lewis Damon House, this property was owned in the early 1900’s by Harlan P. Shaw, a teacher at Bridgewater Normal.

his premises from those of Cloverdale food store which occupied the northeastern section of this property (see discussion below). That Purnelle erected a new building to house his hardware store is supported by the following part of a short piece in the *Independent* on February 9, 1923: "A heavy truck, loaded with goods, while backing into the alley between the Cloverdale and R. E. Purnelle's store, crashed into a large plate glass window in the Cloverdale...." By being both the owner and manager of his store Purnelle joined a rather small group of Bridgewater's commercial entrepreneurs, including his business competitor the venerable John A. Fairbanks, who since the 1860's could also claim this distinction.<sup>112</sup>

Purnelle's new business address was 55 Broad Street, with his hardware store continuing to be an important part of Bridgewater's commercial configuration at least into the 1920's. I do not know if he had any inkling that in May of 1916 his building, along with A. A. Glick's house, would share the distinction of being the first two properties to be connected with the new sewer system on Broad Street. Interestingly enough, however, Purnelle became a member of the newly created Board of Trade in October of 1917 and was appointed to its committee on public utilities. An advertisement in *The Bridgewater Book-Illustrated* gives some idea of the plethora of goods carried by this hardware store around 1918. In matters of a different nature, the Purnelle family rented a house on Park Avenue in October of that year and three years later one on Summer Street; it could be that Purnelle continued to walk to his store during these years, although he did own an automobile at least by 1920. During the several years following the Great War and the international efforts to secure a lasting peace, he took additional steps to expand his business. In the June of 1919, he put up "a building on Broad street opposite his store from which to sell fireworks," averring to have the lowest prices, largest assortment, and best goods; perhaps Cole's and Walker's drug stores took umbrage with these claims. Indicative of his entrepreneurial inclinations, Purnelle, in conjunction with the Gibraltar Paint & Varnish Company of Franklin, Massachusetts, sponsored a "Fire Resisting Painting Exhibition" at the Bridgewater Fair Grounds on September 12, 1919. A week earlier, his ad in the *Independent* had urged folks not to miss this display and to buy at Purnelle's the "paint that will not burn." Ironically, a little more than a year after this exhibition, Purnelle was faced with a decision whether or not to replace his relatively new store on Broad Street, which was declared a "Complete Wreck," following a devastating fire on November 23, 1920.<sup>113</sup>

This fire was the third "serious" one that year in Bridgewater's business section. While the town had created a Fire Department in 1894, updated its main station on School Street in 1911, and purchased its "first motor apparatus" in 1915, it was still a voluntary force that responded to "an alarm rung in from Box 52," located on

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<sup>112</sup>BI, Dec. 31, 1915, Feb. 9, 1923; Spence, *Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>113</sup>BI, Dec. 25, 1908, May 12, 19, 1916, Dec. 13, 1918, May 20, June 22, Sept. 5, 12, 19, 1919, June 11, July 2, Nov. 26, 1920, May 13, 1921; "R. E. Purnelle," *Bridgewater Book*; as I reread the above paragraphs dealing with R. E. Purnelle's, I am reminded of the many topics that I have yet to address in any substantial way in my digitized essays, including Bridgewater's efforts to deal with water and sewerage problems and the role of agricultural organizations such as the Plymouth County Agricultural Society and the Grange, in the social and economic life of the town; if anyone wishes to write about these matters, I would be glad share my notes from both secondary and primary sources.

the “Lower Common” of Central Square, that arrived at Purnelle’s about “5 o clock” in the afternoon. (It would be another six years before Bridgewater could boast of having a permanent and paid fire-fighting force.) At first the main evidence of the problem was the dense smoke emanating from the store’s basement, a factor preventing the firefighters from initially finding the source of the trouble. Subsequently, it was discovered to be a detached gas meter, allowing “a stream of gas” to flow “from the main with no way of shutting it off.” The seriousness of the situation became apparent when an “explosion wrecked the interior of the building and dumped the stock of farming tools, bicycles, seeds, etc., promiscuously into the basement.” Fortunately, “50 yards” of Broad Street had been “roped off,” preventing a large crowd of workers on their way home from the factories along the railroad from viewing the blaze at too close a range. Undoubtedly most of them were employees of L. Q. White shoe company on nearby Spring Street, which at this time was the town’s largest employer. Fed by paint and oil, flames continued to burst high into the air for a few hours, with the roof finally collapsing “about 8.” No loss of life resulted from the fire, but Fred Marshall of the fire department sustained a bad cut on the head, necessitating the taking of several stitches by Dr. Albert F. Hunt in his Kingman Building office on Central Square.<sup>114</sup>

Despite the initial evaluation that the “building is hardly worth repairing,” Purnelle succeeded in putting “his old store” back in “shape” by the following January. During the next few years, items in his newspaper ads continued to reflex a particular season and/or holiday: seeds and fertilizers (which would be delivered by truck in the spring in any quantity), fireworks in July, and “Xmas Cards and Trees” and a plethora of gifts in the Yule-tide. Before ending our discussion about the owner and proprietor of this hardware store, two unrelated additional items are worth mentioning. As had been the case since their early years as residents of Bridgewater, Mr. and Mrs. Purnelle continued in the early 1920’s to play active roles in the Central Congregational Church, the largest of the town’s Protestant churches. Among other activities Mrs. Purnelle took a special interest in the Sewing Society, a type of association also found in other churches, which allowed women to participate in a variety of benevolent activities while at the same time enriching their social lives. Her husband must have watched with keen interest on August 12, 1921, the last baseball game in the Twilight League between the Perkins foundry team and “the Congos,” composed of young men from the Central Square Church. Undoubtedly Purnelle rooted for the “Congos,” since he had donated a “silver cup” to the would-be winner. Alas, the “Iron Men” won by a score of 4 to 3, entitling them to take the trophy home. Two years after this event, the following announcement appeared in the *Independent* on November 23, 1923: “R. E. Purnelle has recently been granted the lunch bar concession in the “Mechanics” Building...in Boston, to-date from some time in February. This is considered the best lunch concession in the city, as practically every affair held in this building draws big attendance and the building is occupied about forty weeks in the year.” This business adventure illustrates once again Purnelle’s entrepreneurial inclinations. Additional research undoubtedly would reveal something about the impact this new undertaking had on his hardware business after 1925. But it should be noted that in April of that year he became a member of Bridgewater’s newly created

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<sup>114</sup>BI, Nov. 26, 1920, Jan. 14, 1921; Tales Around the Common, p. 20; “The Political and Governmental Development of Bridgewater (contributions from Gloria W. Moran): Fire Department,” HH, pp. 58-59; Spence, Fire Service-Bridgewater, Massachusetts, 1844-1910, pp. 36-37.

Chamber of Commerce and was chosen to serve on its advertising committee.<sup>115</sup>

**Gotschalk's Clothing Store**  
**(The Fashion Clothes Shop)**

Gotshalk's Clothing Store not only has the distinction of serving the Bridgewater public for the better part of the twentieth century but also having been run by three generations of the same family. This account, however, covers only its opening in 1913 through the early 1920's. On April 11, 1913, many folks in Bridgewater and the "surrounding towns" who subscribed to the *Independent probably* took notice of a short announcement entitled "Another Clothing Store in Town." (My readers might remember that Arthur F. Caldwell in the same month replaced A. G. Locke as the proprietor of the boy's and men's clothing store in the Keith block on the western side of Central Square (see pages 51-52 in this essay). Without mentioning the would-be proprietors of this soon-to-be commercial undertaking, the public was informed that a "new store will be opened in the new Callahan-Flynn block, 47 Broad street, about May 10 by The Fashion Clothes Shop with a full line of men's and ladies' up-to-date clothing and furnishings." True to its word, the store was opened for business on Friday May 9. On that day a reporter for the *Independent* wrote: "The store is absolutely new from every viewpoint," ... "but by no means least, the proprietors are new comers to Bridgewater." Yet, while pluralizing the word proprietor, the shopping public was still not told who was running this new clothing endeavor. Curiously, a week later the paper included the following item: "The Fashion Shop opened successfully last Friday and the proprietor [not pluralized] expresses much appreciation at the way people are taking hold of the enterprise. His methods are in advance of anything that Bridgewater has experienced but results to date indicate that the people will support a home institution if it is presented to them in the right way." In the same issue of the *Independent*, however, a sizable ad entitled "The Established Principles of the Way We Are Going to Conduct Our Business" ended by identifying Simon Gotschalk, a Russian immigrant who became an American citizen, as the store's proprietor. Nathan Cooper came to Bridgewater with Gotschalk to help him get the business started. It was the aim of this new clothing store to offer "reliable merchandise" at fair prices for all members of the family.<sup>116</sup>

From the store's opening to late November of 1914, Gotschalk continued to be the proprietor of what was

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<sup>115</sup>BI, Jan. 7, 21, 1916, Jan. 19, 26, April 20, 1917, Jan. 10, Oct. 17, 1919, Nov. 26, 1920, Jan. 21, 28, Feb. 2, April 22, 29, June 3, 10, 21, 28, July 1, Aug. 19, 1921, May 5, Dec. 15, 1922, Nov. 23, Dec. 14, 21, 1923, Dec. 19, 1924, April 17, 1925; Carolyn Morwick and Carole Wright, "Social Life of the Community," HH, p. 203; Spence, Churches in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, to 1910, p. 14; may I suggest two more topics which students at Bridgewater High School or Bridgewater State University may wish to write about, namely some aspect of sports in the town between 1875 to 1925 and the history of sewing societies which began when the "The Ladies' Sewing Circle of the New Jerusalem Church" was established in 1856; at this time the church still occupied the 1834 meeting house on Cedar Street and is oldest church structure in Bridgewater's center; the present New Jerusalem Church dates to 1871.

<sup>116</sup>BI, April 11, May 2, 9, 16, 1913; David R. Moore, "Gotshalk Inc." HH, p. 89; Bridgewater Book:1985 Sponsors and Advertisers, no pagination; the two prior references date the establishment of Gotshalk's in 1912; evidently Simon Gotshalk signed a lease with Callahan and Flynn as their block was under construction in the fall of 1912; Census of Massachusetts,1915, p. 326; according to this latter source 210 inhabitants were of Russian background.



officially known as The Fashion Clothes Shop. (I would be interested in knowing his thoughts about the raging war in Europe since his country of origin was one of the major combatants.) During this phase of Gotschalk's proprietorship, ads appeared with some regularity in the *Independent*. Most likely aware of town's plans to celebrate the 1913 Fourth of July in a more intensive way than ever before, his business urged the "public to visit our store and select their Apparel for Men, Women, Boys and Girls" for the holiday. In late summer, the store announced that "New Fall Goods" had arrived. About a month later, as townsfolk began anticipating the beauty of the fall's brilliant foliage, this new clothing store boasted of carrying "an assortment of Merchandise...equal to any of the Department Stores in the big cities." In a less grandiose assertion this ad reminded shoppers of its commitment of "Cleaning and the Pressing" clothes of every description. With Cooper's assistance, Gotshalk's business continued to prosper well into the following year "to such an extent that more room" was required. This need was met in February 1914 when the store's space was doubled by moving into the middle section of the Callahan-Flynn block, recently vacated by C. A. PEABODY Co. This music store had boasted of carrying "everything in the Music Line," including "high grade pianos." Gotshalk's new address was 47-49 Broad Street, placing it next to the Cloverdale food store which had recently occupied the northeastern end of the building. Sometime between this move and late November 1914, a short piece, which is included in the 1985 *Bridgewater Book Illustrated* published by the Old Bridgewater Historical Society, congratulated "Messrs Cooper & Gotshalk" for making The Fashion Clothes Shop Bridgewater's Leading Emporium and Popular Headquarters for Ladies' Men's and Children's Apparel." Whether or not all folks concurred in this evaluation, many more remembered that in early June of that year thieves had entered the store on the night of June 1 and absconded with "cash and goods to the value of over \$60;" five days later the police had "practically no clue" as to who had committed the crime.<sup>117</sup>

On November 27, 1914, Bridgewater's shopping public learned from the *Independent* of Simon Gotshalk's decision to sell the business of the Fashion Clothes Store on Broad street to Nathan Cooper. Several months prior to this "important business change" the latter had left Bridgewater "to establish a like enterprise" in nearby Rockland. When fire destroyed his store, rather than "re-establishing in that town" Cooper returned to Bridgewater to become the new proprietor of the Fashion Clothes Shop, purchasing "the entire Stock, Fixtures, and good-will from Mr. Simon Gotshalk." At this point in my research I not discovered why the store's first proprietor withdrew from this commercial endeavor, especially since the writer of the newspaper article announcing this business change confidently predicted the "continued (my underline) success of the store" under Cooper's proprietorship.<sup>118</sup>

On the same day as of the formal announcement of this business change, Cooper carried a much larger newspaper item entitled "A Great Re-Organization Sale at the Fashion Clothes Shop." After hopefully disposing of the current brands of wearing apparel "within the next ten selling days," the new proprietor proposed "to

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<sup>117</sup>BI, June 6, 27, Aug. 29, Oct. 10, Dec. 12, 1913, Feb. 6, June 5, Sept. 25, Nov. 13, 27, 1914.

<sup>118</sup>BI, Nov. 27, 1914.

introduce my new methods of selling Merchandise.” Other than securing “the services of a first-class Tailor,” providing “Cleaning, Pressing, and Repairing” services, and leaving Circulars listing prices of various articles of clothing at people’s doors, there were no other details of how operations of the store would differ from those under Gotshalk. Cooper’s optimism concerning the future of this Broad Street commercial endeavor under his proprietary control, however, soon dissipated. In early March of 1915, the store, which had been closed, “made an assignment,” with the understanding its “stock will be cleaned out entirely and a fresh start will be made.” A year later, a similar announcement appeared in the *Independent*. Whether or not these changes involved the return of Gotshalk as the proprietor of the shop, this store continued to be known legally as the Fashion Clothes Shop, That it was in business in the Spring of 1918 is evidenced when once again it was the target of a robbery, resulting in the loss of “about \$100 worth of goods . . . , including dress suit cases, clothing, underwear and shoes.” The account of this story did not include the name of the store’s proprietor.<sup>119</sup>

Such was not the case in late November of 1921 when thieves for the “fifth or sixth” time in the early years of this business once again broke into the shop. The *Independent’s* short account ended as follows: “The break was discovered by the proprietor Simon Gotschalk when he opened the store Tuesday morning.” Most likely he was the one to discover that the thieves had entered the store by “descending through the skylight” of this one-storied building. James R. Moore, at this time serving “on the police force as a patrol officer,” stated that “he tried the door at about 4’o’clock and apparently everything was all right.” In any event, the robbers helped themselves to “to approximately 2000 dollars” worth of all kinds of “men’s and women’s wearing “apparel.” With a burglary of this magnitude, the assumption was made that “an automobile” had been necessary to take away such a large amount of merchandise. It would be interesting to know how this crime of larceny-breaking and entering compared in severity to the other fourteen cited in the 1921 Report of the Chief of Police, included in the town’s Annual Report. It would not be surprising if Gotschalk gave some consideration to giving up the proprietorship of The Fashion Clothes Shop on Broad Street. He remained in business, however, and not only joined the newly created Chamber of Commerce in April of 1925 but was also elected to serve on its advertising committee. His clothing store would become an important part of Bridgewater’s commercial life for most of the twentieth century, providing quality clothes at reasonable prices for three generations of Bridgewater’s families.<sup>120</sup>

### THE CLOVERDALE

In early November of 1912 folks in Bridgewater heard or read the following news: “The Cloverdale Co. of Boston, one of the largest concerns of the kind [food shop] in the state, has leased the east store in the new Flynn-Callahan block. Work on this store will be pushed along as rapidly as possible, and it is expected that the

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<sup>119</sup>BI, Nov. 27, 1914, March 5, 1915, March 3, 1916, March 24, 1918.

<sup>120</sup>BI, Oct. 14, Dec. 2, 1921, Nov. 24, 1922, June 1, 1923, April 17, 1925; “Moore, James Richardson, 1888 to 1952,--Police Chief,” HH, p. 272; Michael E. Stewart, “Report of the Chief of Police,” Bridgewater Annual Report 1921, p.119; “Our Chief of Police [Michael E. Stewart],” Bridgewater Book, no pagination; a thorough account of law and order in Bridgewater during the 1920’s would indicate that James R. Moore succeeded Stewart as chief of police in November of 1922; not only did Moore serve in this capacity until his death on March 3, 1952, his many other laudable commitments to Bridgewater’s civic life should also be noted;

new concern will occupy about December.” Delay in the construction of this new block on Broad Street was the main reason for this food business not opening until the following summer. For the first seven years or so Elbert M. Keith was in charge of the daily operations of this branch store. Keith resided in West Bridgewater with his family and most likely was among the many folks who traced their American ancestry back to Reverend James Keith, the first minister of the Old Bridgewater (1664-1719). In his early years at Cloverdale Elbert M. Keith likely arrived at work by taking the Brockton trolley to Bridgewater’s Central Square and then walking to his store in good weather. In stormy or cold weather he could take the bumpy ride on a small electric streetcar carrying passengers as far as the railroad depot on Broad Street. In the post World War I years perhaps Keith was able to purchase an automobile, a form of motorized transportation that was showing signs of becoming America’s dominant way of traveling.<sup>121</sup>

Before discussing the food products featured by the Bridgewater branch of Cloverdale, it might be pertinent to raise several questions, including some concerning its relationship with the parent company in Boston. There are few references to Keith in the primary or secondary accounts I have consulted. That his name never appeared in the weekly ads in the *Independent* might be indicative of the Boston store’s intent to keep a tight rein on its branches. This newspaper, however, occasionally included brief news items referring to Keith as the store’s manager as well as comments about his family life. How did the Boston outfit, “one of the largest concerns of the kind in the state,” hear about the unfinished Callahan-Flynn block and decide to rent one of its three commercial spaces? Did Keith’s play any role in these arrangements? Once he was hired to run this new commercial endeavor what were his duties? Did he write the weekly newspaper ads, for instance? How closely did he keep in touch with the parent store? Was it his responsibility to make sure that Callahan and Flynn received the monthly rent for the space they provided? Did he consult with the parent company concerning the hiring of clerks, including Henry Sinnott of Park Terrace in August of 1913? Did Keith’s duties involve keeping financial records of Bridgewater’s Cloverdale? How much say did he have in the type of food products carried by the local market or were they the same as those found in the Boston store? In the early years of the Broad Street mart evidently much of its stock arrived from Boston via the railroad. Was Keith responsible for transporting the new stock to his store after its arrival at the train station a short distant away? Did he also rely on the electric express service of the Bay State Street Railway Company for “delivering packages by teams” from its terminal located on Perkins Street off Broad Street to businesses and individuals? When this company ceased providing this important service in early February 1915, did Cloverdale make use of Edgar W. Haywood’s delivery system which continued to render this service in Bridgewater and “adjoining” communities? Was Keith still running the local Cloverdale when “heavy trucks”

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<sup>121</sup> BI, Nov. 8, 1912, Aug. 1, 1913, Nov. 19, 1920, Feb. 11, 1921, Dec. 8, 1922; Spence, Transportation in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 72-73; Nahum Mitchell, History of the Early Settlement of Bridgewater, pp. 42, 214-225.

began playing a role in transporting goods to the Bridgewater store? Along with enjoying his annual vacation was Keith's salary commensurate with his many managerial duties.? As an active member of a group of grocery stores and markets in Bridgewater was he required to consult with the Boston store before taking a stand on such local matters as store closings, an issue that had long concerned the town's commercial outfits.? <sup>122</sup>

Until the middle 1920's, Cloverdale seems to have been a profitable business even though it had to compete with a dozen or so large and small food markets in Bridgewater. Averting to be "The Store of Quality and Economy," its medium-sized weekly newspaper ads included not only specials on sale but also standard offerings. While "charging," was not a completely unknown practice among the town's commercial businesses in the early 1900's, patrons of Cloverdale were required to pay cash for their purchases. Its ads never mentioned a delivery service as did those of some of the larger businesses and, rather surprisingly, never cited the store's telephone number. Mostly likely, this small food store relied on passers-by, probably a good number of them on their way home after a day's labor in one of the factories situated along the railway tracts, notably White's shoe company, the town's largest employer, located on Spring Street. I have seen no evidence that Cloverdale ads, even in the first few years, reminded shopper's of its location on the trolley line between Central Square and the railroad station further northeast on Broad Street. In October 1916, the Bay State Street Railway set the fare between Bridgewater's Central Square and the East Bridgewater line at six cents and presumably allowed riders to get off at various spots along Broad Street. Riders going beyond the railway station were still required to cross the tracts by foot to board another trolley going to East Bridgewater and beyond. Beginning in April 1915, perhaps to appeal to patrons of long-established food stores in Central Square, including L. H. Washburn which specialized in "Staple and Fancy Groceries," ads of Cloverdale admitted its location was "A Little Ways Down." but added "It Pays to Walk." (This quotation might have been urging the walk for health reasons, but I suspect it was referring to the lower prices being charged at Cloverdale.) <sup>123</sup>

However, patrons made their way to this small store on Broad Street, it would have behooved them to first check out Cloverdale's weekly ads in the *Independent*, not only to see what items were cited but also those which were not. (On the following page I have included a sample of these ads, allowing my readers to have "fun" comparing food prices in the early twentieth century with those of a hundred years later.) Bridgewater folks planning a meal of fresh meat, poultry, fish, vegetables and fruit would not have found these offerings at Cloverdale; those desiring these kinds of meals might have shopped at Leonard's meat market and Balboni's fruit store, both located on Broad Street, a short walk south of Cloverdale. Taking advantage of the rapid rise of canning factories in the late 1800's, a goodly portion of this store's offerings consisted of canned goods, including some carrying labels still familiar to present-day consumers. A good variety of canned vegetables, including peas, sweet

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<sup>122</sup> BI, June 21, Nov. 8, 15, 1912, Aug. 29, 1913, Oct. 2, 1914, Feb. 19, March 12, 1915, Aug. 31, 1917, July 5, 1918, Nov. 19, 1920, Feb. 11, 1921, Dec. 8, 1922, Feb. 9, 1923; Spence, Transportation in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 78-81; readers may also wish to review pages 12 and 13 of this current essay since they deal more fully with this freight issue; "Transportation," The "Highlights Staff," HH, p. 178;

<sup>123</sup> BI, Aug. 1, 1913, April 2, 1915, Feb. 18, April 6, 1916, Nov. 22, 1918; Massachusetts Street Railway Company bought out the Bay State Railway Street Company in 1919.

corn, wax beans, California asparagus, Van Camp baked beans, and fruits such as pineapple and California peaches could be purchased, placed on pantry shelves, for use at a moment's notice. The same could be said of Campbell's canned soups-- all kinds at ten cents; what their sodium content was I have yet to discover. For those who preferred fish but could not always shop during the day or afford modern refrigeration, Cloverdale carried an impressive array of canned fish. Among those advertised were crab meat, shrimp, sardines, salmon, tuna, clams, and boneless codfish.<sup>124</sup>

As important as these canned goods were to Cloverdale's patrons, there were many other products they found necessary and appealing. If one had the time and inclination to have a good breakfast, this small store offered many nourishing packaged cereals, including Shredded Wheat, Corn Flakes, Grape Nuts, Post Toasties, and hot cereals for the cold months. Milk, butter, and eggs, quite often from local farms, were always available. Some Bridgewater folk were to draw to Cloverdale by its wide choice of cheeses, among them American, Roquefort, Swiss, Edam, and Camembert; whether ice or modern refrigeration were used to prevent spoiling is a topic for additional research. That skim milk, Blewett's Bran Bread, and Swift's Premium Oleomargarine could be found at Cloverdale might be early signs of public awareness of the need for healthier diets. On the other hand, some of its patrons looked forward to topping off their morning coffee with "Fresh Heavy Cream," delivered fresh daily to the store by local enterprises, including Dutchland Farms located at 350 Plymouth Street; this site is now occupied by the Waterford Village apartment complex. (Having a mother who pre-empted the cream skimmed from eight quarts of milk delivered every two days to a family of eight children, I understand this morning ritual.) Cloverdale assured its customers they would be "satisfied" with the store's assorted selection of teas and coffees. One prominent product consistently cited in its weekly newspaper ads, was Rex Coffee, "roasted and packed in downtown Terre Haute, Indiana," beginning in 1905. Claiming it was "The Home of Crackers," Cloverdale boasted of having "the

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<sup>124</sup> BI, Nov. 7, 1913, Feb. 19, April 9, Sept.24, Nov. 26, 1915, Feb. 18, April 20, 1916, March 20, April 6, 1917, Jan. 18, March 24, June 14, 28, July 12, 1918, Jan. 3. March 14, 28, Sept. 19, Nov. 28, 1919, Jan. 2,16, Feb.13, April 2, 23, 1920, Feb.11, March 4, 1921; John A. Garraty, The American Nation: A History of the United States, Fourth Edition (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1979), p. 444; Karen Hess, "Cookery," The Reader's Companion to American History, edited by Eric Foner and John A. Garraty (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), p. 230; Hess maintains that "the quality of food and cooking" declined with the rise of the canning industry in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Best and Finest Assortment” to be found in Bridgewater. This small market also stocked what might be called cooking provisions--sugar, raisins, currants, macaroni, mincemeat, and flour. I was initially surprised to see how frequently lard was cited as one of store’s staples. But alas, older readers of this essay will share my pleasant memories of how this ingredient added immeasurably to the crust of homemade pies. Along with the food choices mentioned above, a small variety of cleaning products could also be purchased at Cloverdale. Borax and Ivory soaps and Old Dutch Cleanser are still known to many present-day consumers. Grandma’s Washing Powder for five cents--that’s another matter!<sup>125</sup>

Patrons might have been surprised to read of Elbert M. Keith’s resignation as “manager” of the Bridgewater Cloverdale on February 11, 1921, after running this store for seven years or so. According to the brief announcement in the *Independent*, he was “forced to give up business for the present on account of his health.” Evidently, he was well enough to take a position with L. H. Washburn, sometime before the Christmas season of 1922. This store, long established on first floor of Odd Fellows block in Central Square, had certain offerings similar to those of Cloverdale. How long this food market remained in Bridgewater after the mid-1920’s I have yet to research.<sup>126</sup>

### Two Neighborhood Stores

It was not always convenient for some inhabitants of Bridgewater’s outlying districts to shop in the town’s center. Thus, they came to rely on several small neighborhood retail businesses to provide a variety of everyday groceries and less essential, but enjoyable, items such as ice cream, candy, tobacco products, and newspapers, especially the *Independent*. Among the more prominent of these stores was owned and managed by Henry P. Sheehan, a Bridgewater native, who represented a small, but growing number of Irish entrepreneurs in the town’s retail configuration. From 1901 to 1912, his business was located close to the corner of High and Main Streets, placing it about halfway between the Stanley Iron Works (officially called this by November 1903) and St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church on Centre Street; for more details about these years, reader’s might wish to see pages 86-87 in my discussion about stores and services in Bridgewater to 1910. In early 1912, however, after a fire devastated Sheehan’s retail property, he moved quickly to have a new store, measuring “about forty square feet,” constructed on the corner of Main and Centre Streets. His new store more or less sat in the front yard of a “large tenement house,” a structure dating back to about 1800 and historically known the Robinson- Keith-Eaton House. Space in this dwelling was used temporarily for Sheehan’s business, including his

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<sup>125</sup>BI, Aug. 2, Nov. 15, 1912, Nov. 7, 21, Dec. 5, 1913, Feb. 19, March 5, 12, April 2, 9, Sept. 24, Nov. 26, Dec. 10, 1915, Jan. 28, Feb. 18, April 20, June 9, July 7, 1916, March 20, April 6, May 4, 24, Sept. 14, 1917, March 24, June 14, 28, July 12, Nov. 22, 1918, Jan. 3, March 14, 28, April 25, Aug. 1, Sept. 19, Nov. 28, Dec. 19, 1919, Jan. 2, 16, Feb. 13, April 2, 23, May 14, Sept. 10, 1920, Jan. 14, Feb. 11, March 4, 1921, June 2, 1922; Bridgewater Book; Tales Around the Common, p.10; Lord, “First Quarter of the Century in Bridgewater,” Tales Around the Common, p. 45; Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 96; Wikipedia, “Terre Haute Rex, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/terre\\_haute\\_rex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/terre_haute_rex); in 1911 the farm on Plymouth Street, which had been in the Hooper family since 1766, was sold to Fred F. Field and Earl D. Upton and became part of the Dutchland Farms of Brockton and Bridgewater.

<sup>126</sup>BI, Feb. 11, 1921, Dec. 8, 1922.

barber shop, while his new store was being built. The opening of the new Sheehan's on August 24, 1912 was indeed a celebratory event. An *Independent* reporter, perhaps with a bit of exaggeration, wrote that "it was estimated that fully 1,000 people visited the store ... and the sales ... were enormous." During the next decade or so Sheehan evidently continued to do a brisk trade in groceries, confectionery, and beverages. Other considerations also helped his business to flourish, including a new soda fountain, a waiting room for passengers riding the trolleys between Brockton and Bridgewater, and the establishment of new postal station in the store on January 1, 1913, providing "sale of stamps, registering of mail, and domestic money order business." A fuller account of Sheehan's business would need to discuss several break-ins at both of its locations. Also, more research is needed on whether or not its proprietor played substantive roles in Bridgewater's retail organizations and in the broader civic life of the town.<sup>127</sup>

Also well-known was a neighborhood grocery store owned and run in 1900 by W. H. H Andrews on the corner of Pleasant and Prospect Streets in Bridgewater's southwestern area, long referred to as Scotland. This commercial business, like Sheehan's, had the advantages of being on a trolley line and serving as a post office substation. Along with the Congregational meetinghouse across Prospect Street, this store formed the heart of the village of Scotland. Having given up his Titicut and North Middleboro grocery route in December of 1901, coupled with reports of his securing a position at the McElwain shoe factory, it came as no surprise to his community when Andrews in April of 1905 sold his grocery business and the building it occupied to Arthur R. Tinkham. The new proprietor and his family moved immediately into the second floor of this rather large and still extant structure. One of Tinkham's first and most important business steps was to apply for the position as postmaster of Scotland's postal substation, which dated back to the late 1870's. With the support of many folks in Scotland and the Republican town committee, he received this appointment. More than one of Tinkham's contemporaries, including Arthur C. Lord and Louise Dickinson Rich, later commented on his retail business. In his account of Bridgewater between 1900 and 1925, Lord remembered Tinkham's ability, despite having only one arm, to "handle a bag of grain as well most men could with two arms;" this observation also illustrates that his business sold other items besides groceries. In a different vein, Dickinson Rich in *Innocence Under the Elms* recalled walking home with her sister Alice from a church picnic at the Lake Nippenicket and using "the trolley fare nickels" to buy penny candy at "Tinkham's general store--where the sign over the door read *Emporium to the Universe*." While this terminology was too grandiose, the corner on which the store was located would remain known as "Tinkham's Corner" for many years to come. It is also worth noting that on April 17, 1925, Tinkham became a charter member of the Bridgewater Chamber of Commerce and was elected to serve as one of its directors. On the same day, the *Independent* praised him for being one of the town's "boosters" and urged other businessmen to "emulate" him. I would also be amiss if I failed to mention that Tinkham, and his wife

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<sup>127</sup> BI, March 27, 1908, Sept. 1, 1911, Feb. 9, 16, March 22, 29, May 2, June 7, 14, 28, Sept. 13, Dec. 6, 1912, March 14, May 2, 1913, Jan. 21, 1916, Dec. 11, 18, 1925; Bridgewater Book; Townscape Institute, Form 124, pp. 321-322; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 86-87; Spence, "Henry P. Sheehan's Store," number 51 of site descriptions submitted to the Bridgewater Historical Commission; Pictorial History: Bridgewater, Massachusetts, 1994, p. 22;

were active members of the Bridgewater Grange. That Tinkham was elected to serve as this organization's president in October of 1923 is not surprising since his store was located in one of Bridgewater's more rural areas where farming was still actively pursued. <sup>128</sup>

### About the Author

**Benjamin A. Spence, a native of Fall River, Massachusetts, a city about twenty miles south of Bridgewater, began his education in the public schools of that community He attended Bridgewater State College between 1955 and 1959, earning his undergraduate degree in secondary education and history. After teaching social studies at the junior-senior high school level in Somerset, Massachusetts, for two years, he went on to receive his MS, 1962, and PhD, 1971, in history from the University of Wisconsin. Almost all of Dr. Spence's teaching career was spent at Bridgewater State. Following his retirement in 1995, he began to do historical research on the Town of Bridgewater, concentrating mainly on the first quarter of the twentieth century, a period of American history in which he specialized.**

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<sup>128</sup>BI, June 9, 1916, May 23, Aug. 29, 1919, Feb. 6, 1920, April 10, 1921, July 27, October 12, 1923. April 10, 17, 1925; Spence, Stores and Services in Bridgewater to 1910, pp. 87-88; Dickinson Rich, Innocence Under the Elms, p. 229; Lord, "First Quarter of the Century in Bridgewater," Tales Around the Common, p. 47; HH, p.182; Moore, Images of America; Bridgewater, p. 38; Pictorial History: Bridgewater, Massachusetts, 1987, p. 39; Townscape Institute, Form 173, pp. 416-417; Spence, "Tinkham's Corner," number 53 of site descriptions submitted to the Bridgewater Historical Commission; I have yet to discover how long Tinkham's store remained in business, but David Moore writes that "it was converted to professional shops in the 1970's; I would be happy to share the many items about the Bridgewater Grange taken from the *Bridgewater Independent* for the years between 1894 and 1925.