

CHAPTER VII.

Educational Institutions — Public Schools — Weymouth and Braintree Academy — Newspapers — Weymouth Historical Society — Social Libraries — Mutual Library Associations — Tufts Library.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS.¹ — Next in importance to the ecclesiastical interests come those of education, of which the public schools form the prominent feature, and for these the town has always taken special care. In the early days of its history the records are exceedingly brief, and only slight and incidental mention is made of many things upon which now there is great need of fuller information. The first notice of matters connected with schools occurs on March 10, 1651, when the town voted to pay Capt. Perkins ten pounds for six months' schooling. Capt. William Perkins was a prominent man in town in thosedays, being "townsman," and probably held other important offices. In subsequent history it was found that it was to men of this character that the town intrusted the education of its children.

It is a singular fact, and one which shows that the interest of the town in education was not confined to its own borders, that the second mention should be that of a subscription of ten pounds sixteen shillings and sixpence by Weymouth to Cambridge College, in 1652. After Capt. Perkins, the next schoolmaster named is William Chard, who was also town clerk,

¹ The portion of this sketch relating to the public schools of Weymouth has been carefully compiled from the town, parish and other records, and is believed to contain as full an abstract as could be desired for a work of this character.

and attended to the drawing up of such legal instruments as the necessities of the people demanded. He is first mentioned in that capacity April 10, 1667, when the town voted him three pounds and ten shillings, the rent of the flats, in addition to his other pay. On the 25th of August, thirty shillings was also added. On Nov. 29, 1669, he was engaged at ten pounds per year, probably employed only a portion of the time. He was also sexton, and the pay of both offices was sometimes included in one vote. On Sept. 18, 1678, his pay had advanced to twenty-four pounds, and the town was to furnish a school-room. The selectmen with the elders were also "to rate each pay-scholar for his benefit." The next year a house and orchard were rented for him at forty-five shillings, and in 1680, the house of James Stewart was bought for forty pounds for the use of the schoolmaster; this was to be paid for by subscription, which failed, and a tax was laid for it. In the following year, 1681, a school-house was built on a part of the land bought of Capt. John Holbrook, the other part of which was afterwards occupied by the new meeting-house, erected in 1682. The house with the furnishing cost thirty-six pounds. In 1684, Mr. Chard's salary was advanced to thirty-three pounds and fourteen shillings. His duties were "to keep a free-school and teach all children and servants sent him to read, write, and cast accounts."

On Nov. 28, 1687, for some reason the town voted "not to continue Mr. Chard in the work of a public schoolmaster at the public charge, but he is at liberty to use the dwelling and school-house until next March meeting, for which he is to ring the bell and sweep the meeting-house." Probably this was for want of funds, as he was in office during the year 1689, and continued a town schoolmaster until 1696, when he removed to Abington. Mr. John Copp was appointed to succeed

him, at thirty pounds per year, and he was also chosen town clerk the same year. Mr. Copp does not appear to have remained in his position quite two years. At the March meeting, 1697, the town voted that "parents shall pay three shillings for each child sent to school between the ages of eight and fourteen years." This was to pay in part the schoolmaster's salary, the remainder to be made up by a tax upon all who lived within two miles of the school-house. By this time the increase of scholars was so large that the town found it necessary to employ more teachers, and Joseph Dyer was employed to teach in the school-house, with John King as assistant, and Edward Bate was to teach in his own house. To follow the precedent, now well established, Edward Bate was elected town clerk. The pay of schoolmaster was to be not over thirty pounds, one third of which was to be paid by those who sent their children to school, and the remainder by tax. The next year the whole was raised by tax, and John Torrey was employed, probably in the place of John King, as Edward Bate still retained his position the following year, 1699, and later Torrey appears as Bate's assistant.

During the summer of 1700, five women were engaged to teach school for six months, at twenty-five shillings each, besides the usual rate paid by those who sent children. On the 21st of October of that year Samuel Hunt, son of Col. Hunt, was hired as schoolmaster at fifteen pounds ten shillings in money for six months, or twenty-three pounds, "as the rates run." In January, 1705, Ebenezer White, of Dorchester, was appointed schoolmaster for half a year at fifteen pounds; and on March 3, 1707, Thomas Thornton was engaged at twenty-five pounds, of fifteen pennyweights each (silver). To him, in 1709, succeeded John Torrey, at fifty shillings per month. In 1717,

school was kept in each school-house four months, and it seemed that now there was a school-house in the south part of the town. John Galt was teacher for a part of this year. In September, 1719, Ebenezer Rolie was hired for a year at forty-two pounds ten shillings, and Mr. Calder in 1723, at the same price. And this year, 1723, a new school-house was built at a cost of forty-two pounds seven shillings eleven pence, between Joseph Lovell's and John Shaw's. Mr. Calder taught two months here, and two months in the North school-house. In 1729 it was voted that the South Precinct should have a school one third of the year, and be at the charge of having a school-house, and the North, two thirds of the year. In May, 1730, Joseph Torrey was hired as schoolmaster at fifty pounds.

After the division of the town into two precincts, a large part of the school business was transacted at the precinct meeting, the town appropriating money and dividing it between them according to the amount paid by each. The appropriations commencing in 1733, at seventy-five pounds, had risen, in 1800, to five hundred dollars. A new school-house was built by the North Precinct in 1730, where the old one stood, near the meeting-house, and Ezra Whitmarsh was the schoolmaster. He was a graduate of Harvard, also town clerk and selectman, one of the fathers of the town. He continued his position as schoolmaster until 1760, teaching sometimes in one precinct and sometimes in the other, according to the various votes of the town. During this time the precincts maintained their separate woman's schools. In 1760 the name of David Wyre appears upon the record as schoolmaster, and in 1769 and 1770, Mr. Lemuel Cushing taught for about a year. Mr. James Blake, A. B., also taught a few months about this time. The necessities of the

times during the Revolutionary War rendered the raising of money very difficult, and probably the school interest, among others, suffered in consequence. There is no other teacher mentioned by name until Dec. 11, 1780, when Samuel Reed was engaged to teach in the North Precinct, "at his offer," six shillings per week in money, "or its equivalent in necessaries at prices before the war."

Jan. 24, 1785, Nathaniel Bayley, Esq., was appointed to answer to the General Court on behalf of the town for neglecting to keep a grammar school; thus it appears that the town had become a delinquent in this matter, but the lesson was a good one, and did not need to be repeated.

After the close of the war, prosperity began to dawn upon the town; the schools soon felt the impetus, and new houses were built and new schools established in various parts. Samuel Reed and James Humphrey (3d) were employed at two pounds per week, and the latter to have three shillings per week extra, "he having been at the expense of fitting himself for a grammar-school teacher." Both of these were men of mark in town, as well as schoolmasters, having been town clerks, selectmen, and also village notaries. Both held long terms of service as school-teachers, with excellent reputation.

In 1796, the school system, which had been sufficient for the needs of the town in its earlier days, was found to be greatly wanting, and a committee was chosen to take the whole subject into consideration and report a new plan. This was done, and in 1799 the town was divided into eight school districts, substantially as it remained for seventy years. Each district was to furnish its school-house and teacher, paying its expenses from its proportion of the school money raised by the town. The business was to be in the charge of

a prudential committee-man selected by the district, but chosen by the town. The school money was divided, sometimes according to the number of families, sometimes according to the number of scholars, and sometimes according to the amount of tax paid, but more generally, a part equally, and a part according to the number of scholars.

In 1810, the employment of "Latin and Greek" masters was authorized, and also "English masters who shall teach equivalent to twelve months in the year." In 1814 each district was ordered to report in detail to the town. In 1816, the "alewife money" was appropriated for school purposes. In 1821, a census reported four hundred and thirty-four families and eight hundred and ninety-five scholars. In 1827 the town chose a committee of seven under a new State law, to have the oversight of the schools, or the general charge and superintendency of them. This was called the High Committee. They examined and approved the teachers, and kept a close watch upon the schools to see that they were properly taught.

This system was retained until the abolition of the district system, in 1869, when this committee became the school committee, combining its former powers with those of the prudential committee. The High Committee reported to the town at its annual March meeting, and in 1839 these reports began their publication. In 1842, a second enumeration of the children of school age showed ten hundred and ninety-nine, an increase of two hundred and four in twenty-one years. In 1845, the Fourth District was divided, and the Ninth set off from it. In 1847, the Tenth District was set off from the Second, and several years later the Eleventh was taken from the Eighth. Various minor changes were made in process of time, but this arrangement was that substantially kept until 1869.

Attempts were made at various times looking to the establishment of a high school, but without success, until about 1852, when the Town Hall was built, in which a room was fitted up for that purpose, but it was not until the next year that the town directed the school committee to go forward, appropriating one thousand dollars for the purpose. For several years it was a matter of some doubt whether or not the school would succeed on account of the exceeding inconvenience of its location, being far away from nearly all of the scholars. Experiments were made, trying one school at the town house for a time, and then changing to two schools, one at the North and one at the South; and it was not until 1865 that the present arrangement was permanently adopted, that of having one school in each of the two sections.

In 1859 the town voted to abolish the district system, and appointed a committee to take the necessary measures to carry the vote into effect, but the following year a return to the old system was made. Again, in 1863, the same thing was voted, and in the next year rescinded. Thus the matter remained in uncertainty until 1869, when the old arrangement was set aside and the present town system finally adopted. The same indefinite attitude was taken by the town with respect to the employment of a school superintendent. The first one was hired, in 1863, and from that time to the present, although a superintendent has been employed for the greater portion of the time, so many changes have been made and so uncertain the action that might be taken, that little benefit has been derived from the services of that officer.

The treatment of the schools by the town seems at last to have settled down upon a more permanent basis that bids fair to continue, and which will raise the schools to a much higher plane than they have ever

occupied. The town system appears to have little, if any, opposition, and the superintendency seems also to have become an established fact. That this is the true course is very evident, from the fact that the town has now forty-eight schools in operation, under the charge of fifty-four teachers, with a school population of two thousand and six, between the ages of five and fifteen years, according to the report of the year 1883, necessitating an appropriation of not far from \$32,000. Of the schools, two are high, twelve grammar, twenty intermediate, and fourteen primary.

WEYMOUTH AND BRAINTREE ACADEMY.¹ — Feeling the need of a higher seminary of learning than any that had been sustained hitherto in the town, in the early part of the present century a project was undertaken by some of the prominent citizens of Weymouth Landing for the establishment of an academy of high grade, and an act of incorporation was obtained, dated 28th of February, 1828, in which Cotton Tufts, Joseph Loud, Noah Fifield, and others were named as incorporators. A suitable building was erected the same year, upon land donated for the purpose by Capt. Warren Weston, on the side of the hill, a short distance above his dwelling, on the Weymouth and Braintree turnpike, and the institution was begun. The first principal was Thomas or Samuel Gregg, and soon after a Mr. Goodell was furnished him as an assistant. Mr. Gregg remained but a short time, and was succeeded by Samuel Thomas Worcester, afterwards judge, with Miss Mary F. R. Wales, as assistant: this was about the spring of 1830. These were soon married to each other, and left the school together. Calvin E. Park, a brother of Pro-

¹ The records of the academy have been lost, and the facts respecting it are gathered from various sources worthy of credit.

fessor Park, of Andover, followed Mr. Worcester, and Miss Lucy M. K. Brastow took the place of Miss Wales. Mr. Eldredge succeeded Mr. Park, and was probably the last that taught for the corporation. There were several who attempted private schools in the building, but, like the academy, they were financial failures, and in 1833 the building was sold and converted into a double tenement dwelling-house, having previously been used for a short time by the public schools. The building was burned in 1844.

NEWSPAPERS.¹ — As far as information can be obtained, the first attempt at newspaper publishing in the town was made about fifty years ago, by Josiah White, of North Weymouth, an amateur printer, with very limited facilities. Only a few numbers were published, and those at irregular intervals. It soon ceased to appear, for want of sufficient encouragement. For many years succeeding this, Weymouth was without a local press, although occasional attempts were made by publishers of neighboring towns to introduce their own papers here with a slight change in the form and with a local heading. In 1867, the *Weymouth Gazette*, published by C. G. Easterbrook, made its first appearance, and it has since that time been issued regularly every week. It has made itself a local necessity, and has become a permanent institution. During the existence of the *Gazette*, several attempts have been made to introduce rival sheets, the first of these being the *Weymouth Courier*, which began its publication in 1876, in East Weymouth, under the charge of Jones & Co. It survived about one year. The *Weymouth Advance* was the next candidate for the position; started in 1877,

¹ Furnished by Charles G. Easterbrook, Esq., editor of the *Weymouth Gazette*.

at East Weymouth, by C. F. David, and had an existence of about two years. Spooner & Webster undertook to resuscitate the latter enterprise, but, after a few weeks, the attempt was abandoned, as was also the effort to revive the *Weymouth Courier* by Mr. Spooner.

THE WEYMOUTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY.¹ — This society was organized in the spring of 1879, by several gentlemen, for purposes indicated by its name. The growing interest in historical matters and the absence of any history of this ancient and important town encouraged the effort, and its object has been to collect and preserve historical material, mainly that connected with this town. Elias Richards, Esq., has been its president since its foundation, and it has succeeded in collecting a valuable amount of historical matter. It has also a small but constantly increasing library of historical works. Its meetings are of much interest and are held monthly in the Tufts Library rooms, where also are located its library and other collections.

SOCIAL LIBRARIES were formed in several of the villages in the town in the early part of the present century. The shares were owned by the members, and the expenses paid by a small annual fee. These proved of great benefit, but the foundations upon which they rested were not calculated for permanence, and in a few years they gradually disappeared. The first permanent organization of the kind was the Mutual Library Association of South Weymouth, formed Nov. 13, 1863, with eighty members, holding about one hundred and thirty-five shares, and a library of four hundred volumes, which has now increased to fifteen hundred. Previous to Dec. 24, 1881, the library was supported

¹ Compiled from the records of the society.

by annual fees, fines, and occasional entertainments. Since that date it has been free to the public, depending upon private contributions and extra entertainments for its support. It is well patronized and promises permanence.¹

THE TUFTS LIBRARY.² — This is a free, public library, located at Weymouth Landing, and was established from a fund left by will, for this purpose, by the late Quincy Tufts, and his sister, Miss Susan Tufts, grandchildren of Dr. Cotton Tufts, one of Weymouth's most valuable citizens during the whole of the latter half of the eighteenth century. The estimated value of the fund is about twenty thousand dollars, and came into possession of the trustees of the Tufts Library in 1879, who immediately proceeded to apply it to its intended purposes. A part of the fund consisted of two buildings at the Landing, the lower story of one being fitted up for the library, and the income derived from the remainder of the fund devoted to furnishing and sustaining it. Books were purchased and arranged, a librarian engaged, and the library opened to the public the 1st of January of the year 1880, with about two thousand three hundred volumes. Since then, the library has been rapidly increased from the income of its funds, and from liberal appropriations by the town, until its volumes have reached the number of about seven thousand five hundred (Jan. 1, 1884), and is one of the most valuable and best selected for its size of any in the land. It is highly appreciated and extensively used by almost the whole body of inhabitants of sufficient age; and the call has been so large from the other villages of the town, that the trustees have made arrangements by which these can be supplied with the

¹ Facts supplied by Henry A. Thomas, Esq.

² From official records.

books without expense to the takers, thus making it available to all the people, although it is located in one of the villages. The income of a part of the fund was set apart by the devisor, for free lectures upon educational matters; and three courses of these have already been provided. The library is in the control of a board of trustees, consisting of the selectmen of the town, *ex officio*, and others chosen by the town according to the terms of the legacy.