

WEST ROXBURY ADVERTISER

A FIRST-CLASS WEEKLY FAMILY PAPER.

JAMAICA PLAIN, MASS., SATURDAY, MAY 1, 1886

HISTORY of the ELIOT SCHOOL.
By the late D.S. Smally.

The first donation for the use of "a school only" to the inhabitants of Jamaica was made by John Ruggles, of the triangular piece of land in front of the Unitarian Church, on which the Soldiers' Monument now stands. The deed of conveyance is dated October 16, 1676. In the early part of the year 1676, Hugh Thomas and Clement, his wife, proposed to the people at the Jamaica end of the town to make over to them their house, orchard, house lot, and night pasture, provided that they would agree to take care of and provide them in sickness and health during their natural lives, and decently inter them after their death.

At a meeting of the inhabitants held March 23, 1676 the proposal of Thomas was accepted, on condition that he should make a legal conveyance of his property of John Weld, Edward Morris, and John Watson, as feoffees in trust for the use of said inhabitants. This agreement was signed by twenty-five inhabitants, and the said Thomas conveyed all his real estate by deed, dated April 7, 1677; and also by assignment all the real estate of his nephew, John Roberts, which was conveyed to him by will of said Roberts a short time previous; and in 1687 by

another assignment all his bills, bonds, legacies, etc.

In the year 1693, John Watson gave three acres of salt marsh for the use of a school on Jamaica or Pond School.

Mrs. Gurnul gave six pounds in money, and Mrs. Mead gave seven pounds, for the use of the Jamaica or Pond School.

On the 10th of July, 1689, the Rev. John Eliot conveyed by deed about seventy-five acres of land "to John Weld, John Gore, John Watson, and Samuel Gore, all of said Roxbury, and to their and to each or to either of their natural heirs successively forever, and to and for the maintainance, support, and encouragement of a school and school-master at the part of said Roxbury, commonly called Jamaica or Pond Plain, for teaching and instructing of the children of that end of the town (together with such negroes or Indians as may or shall come to said school) and to no other use, intent, or purpose, under color or pretence whatever."

In 1727, Joseph Weld, the only survivor of this body of men, memorialized the Legislature, and prayed that three other persons might be appointed as trustees, with power to fill vacancies as they may occur by death or otherwise. The prayer of this memorial was granted, and Nathaniel Brewer, Jr., Caleb Stedman, and John Weld were joined with the memorialist as Trustees.

The first or original Trustees and feoffees were as follows:-

1. John Weld, Sr., Edward Morris, and John Watson, first Feoffees, and were appointed for Hugh Thomas and his estate during their feoffeeship, and to their successors as such.

- 2.

2. John Weld, Sr., and John Watson, first Trustees of two acres of salt marsh, purchased of Edward Morris by virtue of their being feoffees, and which descends to succeeding feoffees.

3. John Weld, Sr., John Gore, John Watson and Samuel Gore, Trustees of the Rev. Mr. Eliot's gift, their or either of their natural heirs, their successors herein forever, John Gore, Joseph Weld, John May, Edward Bridge, Trustees of John Watson's gift, their natural made heirs successors herein.

The property of the Jamaica School was held in trust by several distinct bodies of men, each set having control of a distinct portion of the property.

Under conditions like these, collisions would naturally arise; but no serious difficulty occurred till the year 1803, when recourse was again had to the Legislature, and on the 9th of March (March) 1804 an act was passed incorporating seven gentlemen as a body politic by the name of (of) the Trustees of Eliot vacancies that may occur from any cause whatever.

The Trustees are to be chosen from the free-holders of Jamaica Plain, and "they shall be the true and sole visitors and governors of the said Eliot School, in perpetual succession forever."

In 1818, Mrs. Abigail Brewer (after the decease of her husband) bequeathed to the Trustees of Eliot School, in Roxbury, a parcel of land adjoining the estate of the late Dr. John Warren, deceased, containing sixteen acres, more or less, the income of which is to be applied of the instruction of young females only,

children of the inhabitants of the third parish in (is)
Roxbury.

In 1831, the Trustees erected the brick school-house on Eliot street, which would accommodate two hundred scholars. The upper room was occupied by the primary school, and was supported by the town. The grammar department was taught in the lower room, and was supported from the income of the Eliot fund, and was entirely under the Trustees.

At a meeting of the Trustees held March 31, 1834, "It was voted that Luther M. Harris, in behalf of the Trustees, be a committee to act with John James, the committee appointed by the town, for procuring a teacher for the year ensuing." And on a proposal of Mr. James, to have the Eliot and primary schools united in one, and that a female be engaged as an assistant to the master, it was voted : "That the Trustees accede thereto." From this time till 1842, the Trustees and School Committee continued a united supervision of the Eliot School.

It was thought by many of the proprietors that the best interests of education would be promoted, particularly that of the girls, by separating the sexes in our grammar schools. A proposition was made by the proprietors to the Trustees to place the boys in one building, under the supervision of the School Committee, and the girls in another school under the supervision of the Trustees.

This was acceded to by the Trustees, and resulted in a large increase of the girls' department. Most of the young ladies on Jamaica Plain attending private schools left and attended the Eliot School.

The Trustees held their annual meetings in the early part of January for the choice of officers and immediately after were accustomed to make their annual examination of the school. The town committee and other literary gentlemen were invited to be present, and take part in the examination. During the rest of the year the school was examined every quarter by a sub-committee appointed by the Trustees.

Up to this time the income of the Eliot fund had been applied to educating children in the common branches and some of the English studies.

The sales of land had increased the income of the fund, and many of the proprietors felt that they were not realizing all the benefits of the fund which they might under a different organization.

A committee chosen by the proprietors submitted a plan of a high school to the Trustees, February 1, 1840.

The following is an extract from that report:-

"The committee to whom the duty was assigned of presenting a detailed plan of a high school for the inhabitants of Jamaica Plain, beg leave respectfully to report that after a full consideration of the wants of this part of the city, and of the available means in the hands of the Eliot Trustees, they unanimously recommend that it hereafter be the object of the Eliot School to give instruction to the most advanced pupils in this part of the city, to supply the highest demand in education, and that downward as far as the funds in the hands of the

trustees enable them to do so, leaving the lower departments of instruction to be provided and conducted by the city. With such an appropriation of their means, the Eliot School should furnish a thorough and accomplished education for all the business transaction of life, lay the foundation for the study of the professions, supply the necessary preparation for admission to the higher seminaries and college of learning, But its principal aim should be to afford an extended and complete practical English education.

The school should consist of two departments, one for males and one for females.

The departments should occupy different rooms. But for the purpose of better classification, pupils should pass from there should be a recitation-room connected with each department distinct school should be under the instruction of two male teachers.

We recommend that the supervision be under the administration of a committee of two or four gentlemen from the Board longing to of Eliot School to the Board of School Committee, and residing within the limits of Wards VI. and VII. of this city. Acting as joint committee. It should be the duty of the supervisors thus composed to select and examine the teachers, to determine the text-books to be used, to determine the rules of admission to the school, and to make any arrangement for the better admission of the same as may from time to time be demanded."

Such was the relation of the Trustees and School Committee, which was unanimously adopted by the Trustees.

The following is an extract of a communication from a sub-committee of the School-Committee to the Trustees of the Eliot School, April, 1885:-

"Gentlemen:-The following vote was passed by the town at its last annual meeting: That the sum of eight hundred dollars be appropriated to support the Eliot School in the town of West Roxbury for the current year; provided that the Trustees of the school shall continue or make such arrangements with the School Committee of the town as shall satisfy the Committee that the School meets the Statute requirements in reference to high schools, of which arrangements notice to the selectmen before the said appropriation shall be paid by the selectman."

The following is a copy from the records of the Trustees of the Eliot School: The committee of the Board appointed at its last meeting to confer with Messrs. T. Laurie and G. Reynolds, a subcommittee of the School Committee of the town, on the subject of making such arrangements as may constitute the Eliot School a high School of the town according to the State of this State, would report that they have met this above named committee, who propose the following conditions as necessary to constitute to be legally a high school of the town, namely:-

"1st. The Eliot School must be open to all the pupils of the town of suitable age and qualification; and the School Committee must approve of the admission.

"2nd. The School Committee must approve the teachers employed, and have oversight of the instruction and discipline of the school.

"3rd. The school committee must have the right of visiting and examining the school at pleasure.

"4th. The school must be wholly free, or the instruction gratuitous to all.

"5th. The School Committee must approve the school-books used.

"6th. The school must be included in the annual returns made to the Secretary of the Commonwealth, and in the annual report made by the School Committee.

As the Trustees desire that the school may be in the highest degree useful, and as your committee do not now perceive anything in the above conditions calculated to diminish the usefulness of the Eliot School, they would recommend a compliance with all the above conditions for one year, that the Trustees may have an opportunity of testing the practical working of the arrangement.

"Signed,"
MOSES WILLIAMS,
FRANCES C. HEAD,
(COMMITTEE)

The above report was adopted by the Trustees. This arrangement was yearly renewed for nineteen years.

At a meeting of the Board of School Committee held July 13, 1855, Messrs. Wilson and Reynolds were appointed a sub-committee to confer with the Board of Trustees concerning certain proposed changes in the female department of the Eliot School. From various causes, the attendance in that department has, during the last few months, greatly decreased and the Committee are satisfied that an entire separation of the two departments will promote the welfare of both. They would propose the the girls' division be removed to Village Hall, and that the teacher, who shall be appointed to it, shall have sole charge of its instruction and discipline. To accommodate the primary school, which would thus be removed from Village Hall, they would request the Trustees to grant the use of the room now occupied by the female department of the Eliot School, Should the Board of Trustees accede to these proposals, the School Committee have empowered their sub-committee to carry this into effect. The Trustees voted to give their consent.

On March 4, 1858, the School Committee and Trustees of the Eliot School voted to unite the two departments of the Eliot School under Mr. Hagar in the Village Hall, where it remained till it was removed to the new building, on Elm Street, which was dedicated June 17, 1868.

When West Roxbury was annexed to Boston, the Trustees

decided to terminate their connection with the high school, and through a committee appointed for the purpose, respectfully gave notice to the City and School Committee that the agreement hitherto in force expires Feb. 1, 1874, and will not be renewed.

The Trustees proposed to resume possession of their brick school house on Eliot street, (occupied the past year by the town for primary school purposes at a nominal rent), as soon as it could be done without inconvenience.

A committee was appointed by the Trustees to report on the character and grade of the Eliot School.

The following is a brief extract from the report:-

"The tendency at the present day in all our schools is to give the pupils a superficial knowledge of many studies, rather than a thorough practical knowledge of a less number of primary importance.

"In the judgment of your committee a thorough practical knowledge of the ordinary English branches cannot be over estimated-it lies at the foundation of all mental education, and without it no one can intelligently or successfully discharge the duties of life.

.....
which shall be open to theth of this village of both sexes of not a lower grade than the first class in our grammar schools; it being understood that our existing school but supplementary or an intermediate between the grammar and high schools."

The school was organized on the first Monday in September, 1874, having a male teacher as principal of the school, The number of studies pursued required that an assistant be employed.

The Trustees voted to employ a female assistant.

The number of scholars was limited to twenty-five that special attention could be paid to individual instruction. The object of the school is to enable the graduates of our grammar schools acquire a thorough practical knowledge of English studies, which will fit them for the every day duties of life.

The studies pursued are reading, English grammar, penmanship, arithmetic, and its numerous applications, book-keeping, by single and double entry, physiology, algebra, history, free hand drawing, natural philosophy, and political economy.

Four days in a week drawing and painting are taught by a special teacher in the upper room from half past nine a.m. to twelve.

Two special teachers give instruction in plain and ornamental needle work on the afternoons of Wednesdays and Saturdays.

The studies pursued are elective, subject to the approval of the principal.

Many graduates of high schools, who wish to obtain a more thorough knowledge of book-keeping and arithmetic, attend the school till they thorough understand these subjects and are rewarded by obtaing good positions.