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UNCOMMON SUBURBS: SUBURBANIZATION AT THE WESTERN EDGE OF  
BOSTON, 1820-1873

A dissertation

by

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## Introduction

The following essay examines the development in the 1820 to 1873 period of the towns of Brighton and Brookline, Massachusetts, contiguous communities located at the western edge of Boston. The process of suburbanization on the periphery of Boston has received much attention from scholars. Two of these studies have particular relevance to the present inquiry.

Sam Bass Warner's pioneering work Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900, published in 1962, examined residential development on the southern edge of Boston (in the communities of Roxbury, Dorchester, and West Roxbury). The wellsprings of suburbanization, Warner concluded, were in the city. Central to the process was the extension of streetcar lines into the fringe areas after 1870. Residents of the periphery were thus enabled to commute conveniently and inexpensively to jobs in Boston. The extension of streetcar service occurred, moreover, in the context of an emerging and widely-shared rural ideal emphasizing the pleasures of family life, the security of small community settings, and the benefits of contact with nature. Successive waves of upper, middle, and lower middle class newcomers moved into these developing suburbs from Boston, creating neighborhoods that were economically rather than ethnically differentiated, and which, despite the absence of zoning regulations or other legal restraints on development, manifested a remarkably high degree of architectural and cultural uniformity. The forces

generating residential development were thus, according to Warner, almost entirely metropolitan in origin.<sup>1</sup>

The other major work, appearing in 1985, was Henry Binford's The First Suburbs: Residential Communities on the Boston Periphery, 1815-1860, which examined suburbanization in two communities at the northern edge of the city, Cambridge and Somerville. Binford approached the task from a different perspective---that of the peripheral towns themselves---suggesting that these communities shaped their own development in large measure. He also moved the time frame for the examination of suburbanization back more than half a century. By the early 19th century, Binford contended, a highly distinctive fringe-zone economy existed in the peripheral towns, performing functions which their gateway locations, inexpensive land, and relative absence of government regulation best fitted them for---market gardening and horticulture, small-scale handicrafts industries, transportation-related activities, and a wide variety of noxious enterprises which the city could not accomodate, such as slaughterhouses, cattle yards, rope-making, tanning, soap-making, varnish works, and brick-making. Local entrepreneurs and property owners played a key role in the transformation of these towns into residential suburbs.

The shift to more residentially oriented development occurred in three overlapping stages, according to Binford. From the Federalist era to the Depression of 1837, the fringe zone economy expanded explosively. Then, in the early 1830s and continuing into the 1850s, local entrepreneurs and property owners promoted transportation improvements to facilitate access to the

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<sup>1</sup> Sam Bass Warner, Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900 (New York: Atheneum, 1971) 21-29, 49-66 and 14.

city. This, in turn, encouraged commuting and also transformed local expectations about work, residence and government. At this point, Binford suggests, "residential development superseded fringe pursuits as the dominant ingredient in the suburban economy." Then, in the 1860s came the culminatating stage, a period of commuter domination "when suburban residential leaders confidently and articulately defined their communities' role in the metropolis,...subordinated local opposition, rejected the alternative of annexation, and found their municipal program eagerly adopted by younger suburbs farther from the city." It was suburban residents themselves, Binford insists, not a simple imperial expansion of the metropolis, that was chiefly responsible for these changes.<sup>2</sup>

While the present study find much to agree with in Binford's model of suburbanization, the experiences of Brighton and Brookline differed markedly from those of Cambridge and Somerville---most especially in the degree to which the fringe zone type of economy developed, the pace and timing of suburbanization, and in the responses these towns made to the annexation initiative. Brighton and Brookline's experience of suburbanization not only differed from that of the town's Binford's studied, they differed markedly from one another (thus the title "Uncommon Suburbs").

It is in fact the central thesis of this study that there were sundry roads to suburbanization, the pace and character in a particular community being determined to a considerable degree by the prior political, economic and social

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<sup>2</sup> Henry Binford, The First Suburbs: Residential Communities on the Boston Periphery, 1815-1860 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 1-13; 10.

history of the locality---and that while historical models such as those advanced by Warner and Binford are suggestive and useful, none provides a truly reliable basis for generalization.

More suggestive is Jon Teaforde's model of particularism. Teaforde has written of the social and economic diversity that existed in and around American cities in the 19th century:

Metropolitan areas were fragmented into zones of industry, zones of truck farming, middle class neighborhoods, lower class neighborhoods, black ghettos, Italian districts, German sections, Polish enclaves, and each segment of this segregated metropolis sought different policies from its local government.<sup>3</sup>

That particularism is strikingly evident in the case of Brighton and Brookline, which though next door neighbors with very similar topography and soil, nonetheless developed in counterpositional ways---Brighton becoming an important commercial center (the headquarters of a regional cattle market), while Brookline achieved the status of Boston's premier elite suburb. One, as we shall see below, experienced suburbanization effortlessly and at a very early date while the other embraced suburbanization very late and at the cost of its political independence.

Chapter 1, "Sources of Diversity," asks when and why these localities (quite similar in socio-economic character in the colonial period) began their divergence. It will examine the struggle each waged to attain the status of an independent town---the considerations prompting each to seek independence from its parent community (Cambridge and Boston); the steps each took to win

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<sup>3</sup> Jon C. Teaforde, City and Suburb: The Political Fragmentation of Metropolitan America (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979) 1.

its independence; and, finally, how the movements to attain independence (coming to fruition a century apart) reflected the character and aspirations of each community.

Chapter 2, "The Transportation Revolution," will consider the impact the development of Boston's transportation system (the many new roads, turnpikes, bridges, and the omnibus, railroad, and horsecar lines established between 1820 and 1850) had upon the residential and economic development of the two communities---where the initiative for the various improvements came from; the kind of growth they stimulated; and how Boston's developing transportation nexus altered the social and political fabric of these towns.

Chapter 3, "Market Town" and Chapter 4, "Commuter Suburb," will consider the response each community made to demands for increased services in the 1840 to 1870 period. While both communities significantly expanded governmental services in these years, the demands came from different elements of the population and the responses the town governments made were quite different, reflecting the fundamental dissimilarities in the economic and social character of the communities.

Chapter 5, "Annexation Embraced," and Chapter 6, "Annexation Spurned," will examine the factors that led the voters of Brighton to approve and those of Brookline to reject political union with Boston in 1873. This question is particularly interesting since Brookline, though somewhat closer to Boston geographically, opted to preserve its independence, while Brighton, then not geographically contiguous with the city, voted to join Boston.

## **CHAPTER ONE:**

### **SOURCES OF DIVERSITY**

Muddy River (as Brookline was at first called) and Little Cambridge (Brighton's original name) were founded as outlying villages of the important Massachusetts Bay settlements of Boston and Cambridge. The divergent lines of development these communities later followed were not evident at the outset. For the first century and a half of their histories both were prosperous and stable agricultural villages linked to Boston commercially. In one respect only were they significantly different---in the timing of their struggles for the political self-determination that would free them from the potentially damaging influence of their parent towns, Boston and Cambridge.

While Muddy River attained independence at a relatively early date, in 1705, less than seventy-five years after its foundation, independence came to Little Cambridge more than a century later, in 1807. The timing of the drive for political independence in each locality, it will be seen, was determined less by changes in the satellite communities themselves than by alterations in the character of their parent towns.

The Puritan founders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony came to New England determined to establish a disciplined and cohesive society. They were convinced that England was fast approaching perdition. The commercial revolution was generating a host of social ills there---a widening of the gap between rich and poor, an increase in the number of rootless persons, incidences of theft and cheating in the marketplace, and corruption in the courts.

Most disturbing of all was a decline in the prosperity and status of those dependent on the land for a livelihood. England's traditional social order seemed to be unravelling. Historian Darrett Rutman has described the England of the early 1600s as "a crass, cruel society marked by fundamental social, political and particularly economic changes in which individualism, having disrupted the social unity of the past, was proceeding to extol and enrich the greater individual at the expense of the lesser."<sup>1</sup> These conditions fostered much social anxiety, especially within the largely Puritan middle classes.

The thousand settlers who arrived in Massachusetts Bay in 1630 under the leadership of John Winthrop came to build a commonwealth that would be free of such iniquities. They hoped, in Winthrop's famous words, to be "as a City upon a Hill"---a beacon of Christian virtue for all England to see and copy. Most of the Massachusetts Bay settlers had an agricultural background and thus brought with them to America the attitudes and values of rural England, including a deep suspicion of economic individualism. As Bernard Bailyn has written: "They accepted and probably welcomed the medieval social teachings of orthodox Puritanism if only for its inspiring support of the idea of the close-knit community that existed for the good of all its members and in which each man was his brother's keeper."<sup>2</sup> The social vision of the Puritan founders was at one and the same time profoundly conservative and sweepingly utopian. In the new Massachusetts Bay Colony, status, property and God would somehow be

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<sup>1</sup> Darrett B. Rutman, Winthrop's Boston: A Portrait of a Puritan Town, 1630-1649 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965) 5.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard Bailyn, The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century (New York: Harper, 1955) 39.

reconciled. Individualism would be held in check. The corrupt influences stemming from the commercial revolution would be vanquished.

Of all the early settlements (by the end of 1630 there were ten) Boston proved the least suited to the disciplined social order the Puritans visualized. Trade, not agriculture, was to become the basis of the economic and social life of this port town. Confined to a narrow and hilly peninsula containing only about 750 acres, and thus ill-suited for agriculture, Boston's advantages for trade included the finest harbor in southern New England and a central location on Massachusetts Bay at a point where two major waterways converged.<sup>3</sup> Boston quickly emerged as the principal commercial center of the Bay colony---the chief market town and port of entry for Immigrants and English goods during the the feverish prosperity of the Great Migration (1630-39). Men inclined toward commerce, many with business connections in England, gravitated toward Boston in these years.<sup>4</sup> When the Great Migration ended suddenly in 1640, it was Boston merchants who pioneered the new lines of trade (chiefly the export of grain, meat and livestock to the Azores, Canary Islands, and Spain and Portugal) that revived the sagging Massachusetts economy. By the 1660s Boston was not only the major New England terminus for European shipping but was also the principal point of transshipment for the produce of the entire region from New Hampshire to New Haven.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Rutman, Winthrop's Boston, 39-40 and 164.

<sup>4</sup> Rutman, Winthrop's Boston, 182.

<sup>5</sup> Bailyn, 95.

Cambridge was likewise founded in 1630 as one of the original Massachusetts Bay towns. Settlers were attracted to the location---the northern bank of the Charles River three miles from Boston---by its safer interior location, ample supply of fresh water, and extensive meadows and woodlands. Called originally "Newtowne," the settlement was for a time the capital of the colony before that honor fell permanently to Boston in 1638. The establishment there in the 1636 to 1638 period of Harvard College (occasioning its renaming after England's great center of Puritan learning), made Cambridge the intellectual capital of the colony. Since Cambridge lacked an ample harbor, its economic life throughout the colonial era was dominated by farming, cattle raising, and the activities of the college. Its selection as the shire town of Middlesex County in 1643, and the establishment there of a county courthouse and jail, added to that importance. Yet Cambridge lagged well behind Boston in its rate of development. Though many times larger than the port city in area, in 1765 Cambridge still contained only 1571 inhabitants as opposed to 16,000 in Boston.<sup>6</sup>

The Puritan concern with social cohesion was nowhere more evident than in the organizational structure they gave their towns. Virtually all were established on a common pattern. Everyone was required to live in the shadow of the church-meetinghouse---the social focal point of each community. Farmers were obliged to walk out daily to their fields in the countryside, for the Puritans believed that a dispersed population was more likely to succumb to sin than one kept under the watchful eye of its minister, magistrates and church leaders.

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<sup>6</sup> S. B. Sutton. Cambridge Reconsidered: 3 1/2 Centuries on the Charles (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976) 9-18 and 36; Richard W. Wilkie and Jack Tager, eds., Historical Atlas of Massachusetts (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991) 140.

Puritan towns were also tenaciously exclusive. As T. H. Breen and Stephen Foster have written, "Puritan villagers excluded anyone from their midst who they believed endangered their way of life, and unwanted strangers were frequently 'warned out' when they failed to meet the community's standard.... Such conscious self-selection strengthened social cohesion." This very exclusiveness made it possible to permit a higher degree of involvement in government, for a homogenous population could be allowed broad civil and ecclesiastical participation without risk of social upheaval.<sup>7</sup> The Puritan approach to land distribution also reflected a preoccupation with fostering social harmony. Land grants were made initially to church communities (as projectors of new towns) rather than to individual settlers. In deciding how much land to award a particular household (initially all received some acreage), a town distributed only as much as it believed the household could successfully subdue, taking into account its size and financial resources. By this careful approach to land distribution the Puritans sought to avoid the extremes of wealth and poverty that they believed were corrupting England. There was also much common ownership in the early Puritan towns. Fields were often planted and harvested collectively and pasturelands and woodlands were often held in common. Land could not be sold to strangers without community approval. Yet the Puritan objective was cohesion, rather than equality. "God Almighty in his most holy and wise providence hath soe disposed of the condition of mankind," John Winthrop declared, "as in all times some must be rich some poore, some highe and

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<sup>7</sup> T. H. Breen and Stephen Foster, "The Puritans' Greatest Achievement: A Study of Social Cohesion in Seventeenth Century Massachusetts," in Alden T. Vaughan and Francis J. Bremer, eds., Puritan New England: Essays on Religion, Society, and Culture (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977) 115.

eminent in power and dignitie; other meane and in subjecction." Inequality was not in itself objectionable. Stockholders in the Massachusetts Bay Company, officers of the colony, and the organizers of new towns often received large land grants in recognition of their special contributions. What the Puritans feared was not inequality, but flagrant individualism.<sup>8</sup>

This preoccupation with social cohesion slowed settlement at Muddy River and Little Cambridge. For many years both areas were used chiefly for cattle grazing. As one Brookline historian noted, "the initial significance of Muddy River was simply as Boston's back cow pasture." The land at Muddy River---both marshland and upland---had its advantages. The upland could be used both for planting and grazing, while the marshland, which remained sufficiently open during the winter months, provided year round pasturage and minimized the need for mowing hay.<sup>9</sup> Little Cambridge, which lay south of the Charles River, had similar attributes and served an identical function for its parent town. As early as 1635 Cambridge contracted with William Patten "to keep 100 cattle on

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<sup>8</sup> John W. Reps, Town Planning in Frontier America (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965) 147-162; Sumner Chilton Powell, Puritan Village: The Formation of a New England Town (Garden City: Doubleday, 1963) 92-101; William Cronon, Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 73; Rutman, Winthrop's Boston, 7-8; John Frederick Martin, Profits in the Wilderness: Entrepreneurship and the Founding of New England Towns (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991) 150-152.

<sup>9</sup> John Gould Curtis, History of the Town of Brookline, Massachusetts (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1933) 3 and 14; Howard S. Russell, A Long, Deep Furrow: Three Centuries of Farming in New England (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1982) 20.

the other side of the river for the space of seven months for 20 pounds."<sup>10</sup> Cattle grazing continued to be the principal activity at Little Cambridge until permanent settlement began in 1647, nearly two decades after the foundation of the parent town.

Since the supply of land on the Boston peninsula was severely limited, the town began making land grants at Muddy River as early as 1634. By 1641 all but a very small fraction of Muddy River's acreage had been assigned. The first land grant was made to the Reverend John Cotton, the respected teacher of the Boston church. Grants to a broad cross-section of Boston's population soon followed. In 1635 it was ordered that Bostonians of the "poorer sort...such as are members or are likely to be, and have no cattell" be assigned four to five acres at Muddy River. The largest single grantee of the early period was William Tyng, a wealthy merchant who continued to reside in Boston close by the docks. Tyng received some 600 acres at Muddy River in all. The use to which he put the land is evident from the language of the single largest of these grants, dating from August 1638: "There was granted to Mr. William Tinge the having of his great Lott at Muddy River for Eight persons and Forty and twoe heads of cattell, in present possession and thirty heads to come, foure hundred acres and an hundred more." In all six prominent Bostonians received grants of two-hundred acres or more, these six properties together comprising about one-third of the area of Muddy River.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Lucius R. Paige, History of Cambridge, Massachusetts (Boston, 1877) 38-39 and 624.

<sup>11</sup> Bailyn, 37; Curtis, 10; Bradford Kingman, "Brookline" in D. Hamilton Hurd, ed., History of Norfolk County, Massachusetts (Philadelphia, 1884) 799.

Despite the opposition to individualized dispersal, by 1650 about twenty-five families had taken up permanent residence at Muddy River---an early example of what historian Richard Bushman has labeled "outlivers," persons residing beyond the "circle of virtue and order"; that is, beyond the effective control of church and state. As Darrett Rutman noted of this phenomenon, "the land with its material opportunities was proving disruptive of the communal spirit....Men were seeking their own aggrandizement, not God's. The land was tending to frustrate all efforts of the community to enforce godliness and morality by law or in the church and family."<sup>12</sup>

Settlement at Little Cambridge came still later. Cambridge made land grants on the south side of the river as early as 1635, but permanent settlement there occurred only a dozen years later. The first three families to locate in Little Cambridge were the Champneys, Sparhawks, and Danas, all of whom moved across the river from Cambridge proper in 1647, following John Eliot's October 1646 conversion of the local Indians to Christianity. Two of these men were quite prominent. Richard Champney was the Ruling Elder of the Cambridge church, the most important figure in the congregation after the minister. Nathaniel Sparhawk II was the son of one of Cambridge's wealthiest men. When his father, Nathaniel Senior, died in 1647, leaving an estate of five dwellings and about a thousand acres, much of it located south of the river, the young man decided to move his family there. Nathaniel II later served as Selectman of Cambridge and

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<sup>12</sup> Kingman, 796 and 801; Curtis, 2 and 23-26; Richard L. Bushman, From Puritan to Yankee: Character and Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765 (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1967) 9; Rutman, Winthrop's Boston, 96.

Deacon of the church. The third of these early settlers, Richard Dana, though less prominent, had nonetheless acquired a property of one hundred acres.<sup>13</sup>

Neither location had any special qualities or advantages to offer apart from proximity to the Boston market. "At Muddy River there appear to have been no remarkable advantages," notes one source. "Here lay a rolling landscape of some picturesqueness and no exceptional resources, dominated by the typical glacial topography of New England."<sup>14</sup> While more varied topographically (being low and marshy in the vicinity of the Charles River and rising "toward the south and west into beautiful eminences"), Little Cambridge likewise had no exceptional attributes.<sup>15</sup> Commercial farming, the business of furnishing Boston various agricultural products (chiefly corn, oats, barley, hay, and fruit and vegetables) was to be the principal occupation in both locations throughout the colonial era.

Yet these communities did have a special advantage---their location on Boston's western doorstep---at the threshold of New England's largest population and trading center. By 1650, one fifth of the Massachusetts Bay Colony's people lived in Boston. As the focus of the port city's economic life shifted from agriculture to trade after 1640, Boston became increasingly dependent on its immediate hinterland for food and trading commodities.<sup>16</sup> Muddy River and Little Cambridge both contained good rich soil and their agricultural surpluses no doubt

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<sup>13</sup> Paige, 506-507; 656-657 and 526.

<sup>14</sup> Curtis, 2.

<sup>15</sup> Elias Nason, A Gazeteer of Massachusetts (Boston, 1874) 174.

<sup>16</sup> Rutman, Winthrop's Boston, 191.

helped furnish Boston's merchants with the products they needed to establish these new lines of trade. "This thriving commercial community [Boston] was intimately connected to the surrounding countryside," Darrett Rutman has written. "For the trade in grain and provisions not only extended outward from the harborside but inland into the very heart of the commonwealth." While the primitive state of the colony's roads impeded the movement of goods from the interior, as Rutman has written, "produce moved easily into Boston from towns just back from the coast."<sup>17</sup>

Being situated on the main roads linking Boston to its western and northern hinterland, the communities of Muddy River and Little Cambridge were ideally situated to supply the expanding Boston market. The farmers of Brookline and Little Cambridge had merely to haul their produce a few miles by way of the Roxbury Highway and Neck to tap into the largest market in the region.<sup>18</sup> The importance of these nearby communities to Boston is suggested by its assignment of a Clerk of the Market to Muddy River in the 1660s.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Rutman, Winthrop's Boston, 186-187; Rutman, "Governor Winthrop's Garden Crop: The Significance of Agriculture in the Early Commerce of Massachusetts Bay," in Vaughan and Bremer, 162.

<sup>18</sup> The only road from the Boston peninsula to the mainland ran down the Roxbury Neck, then skirted the Back Bay, passing over Parker Hill into Brookline Village, where it forked, one branch running west, the other north. The western branch, the so-called Watertown Highway (present-day Washington Street), passed through Little Cambridge to Newton, Watertown and points west. This important roadway existed in a crude state as early as 1640. In 1657, the towns of Boston, Cambridge and Watertown cooperated in widening the portion between Muddy River and the Watertown Mill to a width of sixty-six feet. The other fork, which connected Boston to Harvard College, ran along present-day Harvard Street and Harvard Avenue through the northern part of Muddy River and the eastern part of Little Cambridge to the "Great Bridge" (the only bridge on the tidal portion of the Charles River before 1793) and on into Harvard Square, thereby connecting the colony's principal city with its university and the towns to

Despite the short distances involved, commuting of the modern variety (that is to say, routine travel from a residence in a peripheral community to workplace in the city) did not emerge for many decades. With a population of about 6,000 in 1690, Boston was as yet little more than an overgrown village nestled on the eastern slope of the Shawmut peninsula facing the sea, what urban historians call a "walking city"---an indiscriminate mixture of elite and poor housing, wharves, warehouses, mercantile establishments and artisanal workshops. More fundamentally, it was a place where, despite great commercial vitality, traditional social values were still strong, deference was powerful, the upper classes felt safe and the lower classes relatively satisfied and hopeful. As Gary Nash has written, in late 17th century Boston "the corporate whole, not the individual was the basic conceptual whole."<sup>20</sup>

In the 1690 to 1750 period, however, Boston began experiencing major economic and social changes. A succession of costly imperial wars transformed it from a socially integrated regional market town into a center of imperial trade. As Nash noted of this phenomenon:

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the north and west. An order "in respect to making a sufficient path from the south side of Charles River, from Cambridge to Roxberie, etc.," was passed by the Town of Cambridge as early as 1638. The farmers of Little Cambridge and Muddy River could thus transport goods to the Boston market conveniently. Boston, Street Laying Out Department, A Record of the Streets, Alleys, Places, etc., in the City of Boston (Boston, 1910) 486.

<sup>19</sup> Percy Wells Bidwell, "Rural Economy in New England at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century," Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences 20 (1916) 352-353; Curtis, 39.

<sup>20</sup> Gary B. Nash, The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979) 5.

Almost continuously for a quarter-century after 1689 the colonies were involved in military conflict originating in Europe. Wars alternately stimulated and depressed trade. They also opened up new forms of entrepreneurial activity such as smuggling, piracy, and military contracting, providing the basis for new urban fortunes as well as new urban misery, altered the social structure, and exposed the towns to the vagaries of the market economy to a degree previously unknown.<sup>21</sup>

The development of this expanded market economy provided Boston's merchants with enhanced opportunities to accumulate wealth. In an ever more precarious economic world, however, the time-honored regulations of a corporate society, the practices that had fostered deference in the past, proved unserviceable. Entrepreneurial achievement replaced commonwealth as the upper class ideal, and as the rich grew richer they came increasingly to believe that their economic status stemmed from greater sobriety, frugality and industry, and that the poor were such not owing to misfortune, but rather to a lack of initiative.<sup>22</sup>

The Anglo-French wars also drove up taxes to extremely burdensome levels and forced the specie-poor colonial government to print huge quantities of paper money that diminished the real wages of laboring people. They also significantly increased the numbers of widows and fatherless children in Boston, thereby creating a new class of dependent poor. The status and security of the established craftsmen of the urban middle class declined markedly in this new economic climate. Moreover Boston's economic condition failed to improve

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<sup>21</sup> Nash, 55.

<sup>22</sup> Nash, 84; James A. Henretta, "Economic Development and Social Structure in Colonial Boston," in Kenneth T. Jackson and Stanley Schultz, eds., Cities in American History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972) 66-78.

during the long period of peace between the second and third French War (1713-1740). New York and Philadelphia, Boston's chief rivals, which benefitted from more productive hinterlands and greater proximity to markets in the Caribbean, displaced Boston as the main supplier of the sugar islands.<sup>23</sup> By the mid-1740s, conditions in Boston were so bad that one-fourth of its population had fallen near or below the subsistence level.<sup>24</sup>

A new class consciousness emerged in Boston in the first half of the 18th century---a conviction on the part of the lower orders that the rich were getting richer precisely because the poor were getting poorer.<sup>25</sup> A series of political controversies that pitted the merchant class against the lower classes helped foster this new outlook: attempts to increase the power of the merchants by doing away with town meetings and to transfer city government to a chartered corporation; attempts to establish a civic market under the elite's control; and emotion-charged disputes over currency and credit policies. The Great Awakening of the 1730s and 40s with its attacks on wealth and vested authority also contributed to the new class- consciousness.<sup>26</sup> Public rioting became more and more common in the port town.irate mobs demolished the town market in 1737, broke into the granary in 1743, and set fire to Thomas Hutchinson's mansion during the currency dispute of 1749.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Nash, 112-113.

<sup>24</sup> Nash, 117.

<sup>25</sup> Nash, 217.

<sup>26</sup> Nash, 215.

<sup>27</sup> William Pencak and Ralph J. Crandall, "Metropolitan Boston Before the American Revolution: An Urban Interpretation of the Imperial Crisis,"

By the 1740s economic conditions in Boston had deteriorated to the point that well-to-do Bostonians began moving their families to the relative safety of such neighboring towns as Roxbury, Milton, Brookline, and Cambridge. Most continued to travel back and forth to Boston intermittently to attend to business concerns and therefore maintained city as well as country residences. Thomas Hutchinson, for example, owned both an elegant townhouse in Boston's North Square and a magnificent country estate in Milton, ten miles south of the city.

Many factors motivated the removal of the well-to-do to the countryside. The common denominator, however, was anxiety---fear of epidemics (Boston experienced frequent outbreaks of smallpox and diphtheria throughout the period), fear of destructive fires (the largely wooden and highly congested city was the greatest fire trap in North America), fear of increasing disorderliness, drunkenness, crime, and most especially, fear of politically-motivated mob violence. In removing to the countryside, the well-to-do sought to insulate themselves and their families from these perils.<sup>28</sup> What they found in these outlying towns was both greater safety and a social climate more respectful of their social rank and prerogatives.

The influx of the well-to-do into Brookline (Muddy River's new name after 1705) began in 1740 when two successful Bostonians left the city to return to the community of their birth---Nathaniel Gardner, a wealthy merchant, and Dr. Zabdiel Boylston, the physician and apothecary who introduced smallpox inoculation to Boston during the devastating epidemic of 1721-22. As members

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Proceedings of the Bostonian Society, Annual Meetings, 1977-83 (Boston: The Bostonian Society, 1985) 58.

<sup>28</sup> Pencak and Crandall, 58 and 65-66.

of old Brookline families they were easily absorbed into the life of the town. Boylston was chosen a selectman in 1744.

When Gardner died in 1746, his Brookline property was acquired by a prominent Bostonian without roots in the town---Jeremiah Gridley (1702-67), the colony's leading lawyer, known as the "Father of the Massachusetts Bar." Gridley was a man of considerable influence, having served as a colonel of militia, as Grandmaster of the American Masons, and as Attorney General of the province. In 1761 he would act as attorney for the crown in the famous Writs of Assistance Case. Brookline added to Gridley's honors by electing him its representative to the Massachusetts Assembly four times, town meeting moderator six times, and selectman on three occasions between 1754 and 1767, reflecting the highly deferential social climate that prevailed at the time.<sup>29</sup>

William Hyslop, esq., a Scottish merchant of considerable wealth, also found Brookline a congenial retreat after decades of residence in Boston. Hyslop purchased Dr. Boylston's estate upon the latter's death in 1765. In 1767 a town meeting named him to a committee to promote non-importation. In 1769 (having resided in Brookline a scant four years) the town elected Hyslop town meeting moderator.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> John R. Galvin, Three Men of Boston (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1976) 28-34; Albert Bushnell Hart, Commonwealth History of Massachusetts, vol 2: Province of Massachusetts, 1689-1775 (New York: The States History Company, 1928) 175 and 179; Ronald Dale Karr: "The Evolution of an Elite Suburb: Community Structure and Control in Brookline, Massachusetts, 1770-1900," diss., Boston University, 1981, 59-65.

<sup>30</sup> Curtis, 121-122; Kingman, 836-841.

The arrival in Brookline of Henry Hulton, Esq., who acquired the Gridley estate following the latter's death in 1767, provides the most revealing evidence of the atmosphere in Brookline in the years before the revolution. A Briton and the King's Commissioner of Customs for the port of Boston, Hulton reached Massachusetts in 1768 at the height of the Stamp Act crisis, and was obliged to take refuge on the British warship Romney. His sister, Anne Hulton, described the violent atmosphere then prevailing in Boston in a letter to relatives in England:

We soon found that the Mobs here are very different from those in Old England where a few lights put into the windows will pacify, or the imposition of the Magistrate restrain them, but here they act from principle & under Countenance, no person daring or willing to suppress their Outrages.... These Sons of Violence after attacking Houses, breaking windows, beating, Stoning & bruizing several gentlemen belonging to the Customs, the Collector mortally, & burning his boat, they consulted what was to be done next, & it was agreed to retire for the night.<sup>31</sup>

Commissioner Hulton accordingly snatched up the opportunity to buy an estate in Brookline at a safe distance from this violence. Here he lived in relative safety for eight years, erecting greenhouses, raising celery, broccoli, and artichokes, and establishing what was widely regarded to be the best orchard in the province.<sup>32</sup> While Brookline bestowed no political honors upon the controversial Hulton, neither did it seek to disturb or dislodge him. The Revolution finally caught up with the crown officer in 1776 when the Massachusetts government

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<sup>31</sup> Curtis, 127.

<sup>32</sup> Curtis, 129.

labelled him a notorious conspirator, ordered his banishment, and confiscated his Brookline estate.<sup>33</sup>

Upper class Bostonians also moved to Little Cambridge. Captain Nathaniel Cunningham, an immensely wealthy West Indies merchant acquired a property there sometime before 1737. This estate, later called Bellvue, commanded a magnificent view of the surrounding countryside and was accounted one of the finest country seats outside of Boston. The possession of an elegant country estate was becoming more and more necessary for the rich and powerful as an emblem of their social rank. While Cunningham never won election to Cambridge town government, the leading part he played in the effort to establish a local church reflects his acceptance by the people of Little Cambridge. Significantly, when Captain Cunningham died in London in 1748, his son and principal heir, Nathaniel Jr., also took up residence at Little Cambridge.<sup>34</sup>

A number of prominent Tories located in Little Cambridge in the years just before the Revolution. A sizeable contingent already resided in Cambridge proper---the Vassalls, Phipses, Inmans, and Lechmeres, among others. These families derived their income principally from service to the crown, Boston-based commerce, West Indian plantations and the slave trade, but played almost no part in Cambridge's civic affairs. As Cambridge historian S. B. Sutton has

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<sup>33</sup> David E. Maas, ed., Divided Hearts: Massachusetts Loyalists, 1765-1790 (Boston: New England Historical Genealogical Society, 1980) 83.

<sup>34</sup> J. P. C. Winship, Historical Brighton, vol. 1 (Boston, 1899) 14; "Christopher Kilby of Boston," New England Historical and Genealogical Register, 26 (1872): 43 and 46-47.

written, "In general the Tories were not civic minded people, except for their service to Harvard College. They kept their tight circle and were devoted to finance, foppishness, and fashion."<sup>35</sup> Whatever the people of Cambridge (Little Cambridge included) may have thought of the political views of these Tories, however, they made no effort to dislodge them.

The Tory influx into Little Cambridge began in 1760 when James Apthorp, son of the great merchant and war contractor Charles Apthorp, purchased Bellvue from the Cunningham heirs. Apthorp made elaborate additions to the mansion, improvements which have been attributed to Peter Harrison, architect of King's Chapel.<sup>36</sup> Another Tory, wealthy Boston merchant John Dennie, purchased the estate from the Apthorps in 1767 just before the Revolution. Here he resided undisturbed until his death in 1777.<sup>37</sup> In 1760, Benjamin Faneuil, brother of Peter Faneuil, heir to one of the largest mercantile fortunes in Boston, retired from active business and moved to a seventy acre estate in the western part of Little Cambridge, replacing an old house on the property with an elaborate Georgian mansion. "No expense was spared in the construction, the best materials being obtained," one account of the estate notes. Faneuil was fifty-nine when he settled in Little Cambridge, having left the management of his Boston properties in the hands of his sons, Benjamin, Jr. and Peter. Though a fervent

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<sup>35</sup> Sutton, 23.

<sup>36</sup> Wendell D. Garrett, Apthorp House, 1760-1960 (Cambridge: Adams House, 1960) 28-29.

<sup>37</sup> Winship, vol. 1: 14; Paige, 446.

Tory, he lived on undisturbed in Little Cambridge until his death at age eighty-four in 1785.<sup>38</sup>

The communities of Muddy River and Little Cambridge were in fact remarkably alike in social and economic character in their early histories. Both were agricultural towns, linked commercially to Boston. Both were sparsely populated. Neither had developed any industry. Finally, by furnishing a pleasant and healthy rural environment at a convenient distance from the noise and confusion, danger of riot, and health hazards of the metropolis, both had attracted a number of wealthy Bostonians to their midst.

Social stability and political deference characterized both localities in the 18th century. Both were dominated by a few key families. As Ronald Dale Karr wrote in his 1981 study of Brookline, "The Evolution of an Elite Suburb," three families---the Whites, Gardners, and Winchesters---dominated the political life of Muddy River almost from its inception. The founders of all three had arrived in the middle of the seventeenth century. John White of Watertown came in 1650. By 1687 he and his three sons owned hundreds of acres and the Whites had become Muddy River's most important family. They would play a key role in the political life of the community for generations to come. Three grandsons of John White dominated officeholding in the town in the first half of the 18th century,

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<sup>38</sup> Mrs. John A. Weisse, A History of the Bethune Family Together with a Sketch of the Faneuil Family (n.p.: privately printed, 1884) 52-53; Winship, vol. 1: 47-50; James A. Savage, A Genealogical Dictionary of the First Settlers of New England, vol. 2 (Boston, 1860) 139-140; George T. Elliott, "The Faneuil Mansion and Estate," The Item, 17 June 1916: 1.

serving thirty-nine terms as Selectmen, seventeen as representative, forty-two as moderator, and twenty-six as clerk-treasurer.<sup>39</sup>

The second most important family were the Gardners. Thomas Gardner of Roxbury had come to Brookline in 1660. By 1674 he was the largest single taxpayer in the community. By the time of Thomas' death in 1691 the Gardners stood at the top of the community's social hierarchy, a position the family continued to occupy during the whole of the 18th century.

John Winchester, the founder of the third of these dominant families, arrived from Hingham in 1657. By 1674 he was the sixth largest taxpayer in town and had been elected to the offices of surveyor and constable. By the time of his death in 1694 the Winchesters were firmly established alongside the Whites and Gardners at the very top of Muddy River's social hierarchy. The dominance of these three families, Karr writes, was rooted in their control of Brookline's rich soil. "In an agrarian community, ownership of adequate amounts of good land largely determined the long-term status of a family. Without enough land family status was eroded, forcing sons away in search of subsistence. Families that maintained positions of leadership invariably controlled large parcels of rich farmland."<sup>40</sup> The social structure of Little Cambridge, as will be seen below, was quite similar.

Concern over the changing social and political character of Boston prompted the leaders of Muddy River to seek increasing degrees of self-determination in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Its residents were finding

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<sup>39</sup> Karr, 33-34.

<sup>40</sup> Karr, 34 and 32-42.

it increasingly difficult to influence public policy through the medium of the Boston town meetings. While Muddy River's population stood at no more than 200 in 1660, Boston's numbers already exceeded 3,000. Desiring to have the dominant voice in the selection of its local officers, in 1662 Muddy River sought and was promptly granted the right to hold a local meeting prior to the Boston town meeting to nominate candidates for constable and other local positions. Since these names would be the only ones presented to the Boston town meeting, those chosen were certain of election.<sup>41</sup> Boston's willingness to concede this measure of local control in 1662 contrasts sharply with its later opposition to requests for autonomy, but in 1662 Boston was still operating on the basis of what Michael Zuckerman, writing of eighteenth century towns, has labeled "consciously contrived solidarity." New England towns "allowed every important interest in the society a voice in the determination of public policy," Zuckerman noted.<sup>42</sup> Whatever the case may have been elsewhere in New England, however, Boston's concern to promote solidarity did not survive into the eighteenth century.

Conditions in Boston began to change markedly as early as the late 1670s, a period of great difficulty for Boston. King Philip's War (1675-76), a major fire which destroyed eighty houses and seventy warehouses, and a general "failing of trade" imposed a heavy financial burden on Boston and drove its tax rate up to an unprecedented level. As an outlying village, with a traditional agricultural economy, Muddy River derived few benefits from these

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<sup>41</sup> Curtis, 40.

<sup>42</sup> Michael Zuckerman, Peaceable Kingdoms: New England Towns in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Vintage Books, 1970) 123 and 133-34.

mounting expenditures. Its growing disaffection with Boston increased In 1683 when the Boston town meeting authorized the establishment of two free schools on the peninsula, thereby adding to the tax burden without providing any direct benefits to Muddy River.<sup>43</sup>

In March 1686, Muddy River petitioned Boston for a free school of its own. This the Boston town meeting was unwilling to grant. Rather than deny the request outright, however, the parent community sought to sidestep the question by referring it to its next annual meeting. At this point an exasperated Muddy River decided to appeal to the Royal Governor and Council.

In taking their petition to the colonial government, Muddy River took advantage of a fierce political struggle then going on in the colony. Puritan control of Massachusetts had ended abruptly in 1684 when King Charles II, in an attempt to consolidate control of Britain's North American colonies, revoked the old Massachusetts charter. By 1686 newly-appointed Governor Joseph Dudley ruled the colony without benefit of a representative assembly.

In the absence of representative government, the Boston town meeting had become the colony's most important center of opposition to royal authority. Muddy River's petition offered Dudley and the Council an opportunity to punish Boston for its intransigence.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Curtis, 45-46.

<sup>44</sup> Michael G. Hall, Edmund Randolph and the American Colonies, 1676-1703 (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1960) 98-100; David S. Lovejoy, The Glorious Revolution in America (New York: Harper & Row, 1972) 154-155 and 159.

In answer to the petition of ye inhabitants of Muddy Rivere praying for the Libertie to erect a School &c. Upon the hearing thereof the President & Council do order That henceforth the sd Hamlet of Muddy River, be free from Towne Rates to the Town of Boston they mainetaining their own Highways & poor and other publick charges arising amongst themselves And that within one year next comeing they raise a Schoolhouse in such place as the two next Justices of the County upon a public hearing of the inhabitants of the sd Hamlet shall determine alsoe maintain an able reading and writinge Master there from and after that day, and that the Inhabitants annually meet, to choose three men to manage there affaires.<sup>45</sup>

While still a part of Boston and subject to the authority of the Boston town meeting for the election of constables, surveyors, military service, and assessment and representation in the colonial government, the Provincial government now granted Muddy River the right to raise its own taxes, maintain its own schools and highways, and care for its own poor. The outlying community was also authorized to elect three men to oversee its affairs, thereby elaborating the local political framework that had come into existence in 1662.<sup>46</sup>

The late 17th century was an anxious period for the residents of Muddy River. After the fall of King James II in 1688, and the promulgation of a new provincial charter, Boston attempted to recapture some its lost authority. The liberties the provincial government had so casually taken from Boston, the people of Muddy River reasoned, it might just as easily restore. As long as Muddy River and Boston continued to be connected politically there existed a potential for damaging interference by Boston in the affairs of the outlying community.

Meanwhile conditions in Boston were worsening. The first French War (1689-97) was generating rapid economic and population growth. The gap

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<sup>45</sup> Curtis, 45.

<sup>46</sup> Curtis, 47-48; Karr, 10.

between rich and poor was widening and the position of the middle classes deteriorating. Taxes, already burdensome, continued to climb. The Boston town records for the period are filled with references to the mounting cost of poor relief which "presage great poverty to be hastening upon this towne."<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the overthrow of the autocratic Andros regime contributed to a new political spirit in Boston. As Gary Nash has written, "by the 1690s Boston contained many people who no longer regarded themselves as mere tools in the hands of others, passive implements from whom only obedience and submission were due." Desiring to insulate itself against the forces that were transforming Boston, Muddy River sought political self-determination.

The movement for total separation from Boston was initiated in 1701 in a petition to the General Court asking that Muddy River be created a "District or Hamlet Separate from the Town [Boston]," contending that it was too remotely situated for its citizens to avail themselves of the services Boston provided. That Muddy River's fears of political reintegration with Boston were well founded is shown by the response the General Court made to this petition, for it not only flatly refused to consider outright independence, but also suggested that in future Boston be permitted to resume the function of collecting Muddy River's taxes.<sup>48</sup>

By 1702 the political climate had changed to Muddy River's advantage. After an absence of nine years, Joseph Dudley had just been reappointed Royal Governor. More importantly, Muddy River now counted among its residents

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<sup>47</sup> Boston, Record Commissioners, Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston Containing the Boston Records from 1700 to 1728 (Boston, 1883) 2.

<sup>48</sup> Curtis, 49.

Samuel Sewall Jr., son of Chief Justice and Council member Samuel Sewall, and son-in-law of Royal Governor Dudley. Shortly after his arrival the well-connected young man was elected Clerk of the Hamlet.<sup>49</sup>

In June 1704, Muddy River initiated a second petition requesting separation. As one would expect, the parent town strenuously opposed independence for its satellite, arguing that such would set a dangerous precedent for other outlying villages. Boston pointed out that it was burdened with high taxes and a constantly increasing number of poor people---"such as are not capable to defray but rather greatly increase the charge," while Muddy River had "grown more opulent and capable to be helpful to the town." Thus, the remonstrance continued, "to be sent from us seems most unreasonable and in them very ungrateful and may be a bad example to others to endeavor the like, and to cutt the town into such shreds, as will best suit themselves without any due regard to ye public Intrist." The Royal Council chose to ignore Boston's protest, however, and on November 13, 1705, granted Muddy River its independence, whereupon the newly incorporated community renamed itself "Brookline."<sup>50</sup>

Little Cambridge also attained self-determination by degrees, but the process there was much more protracted. While the historical records relating to Little Cambridge are rather thin, available evidence suggests that the south side community, which contained fewer than 200 residents in 1700, was both prosperous and stable. An 1688 Cambridge tax valuation shows that Little

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<sup>49</sup> Karr, 11; Justin Winsor, The Memorial History of Boston: vol. 2: The Provincial Period (Boston, 1881) 335.

<sup>50</sup> Curtis, 56.

Cambridge landowners were, on average, better off than their fellow townspeople living north of the river. More than 44 percent of local landowners paid taxes of 5 shillings or more as compared to just 27 percent of those residing in Cambridge proper. Of the four communities that then comprised Cambridge (Arlington and Lexington also formed part of the town), Little Cambridge was the most prosperous.<sup>51</sup> As in Muddy River, a few key figures dominated public office. Of the five principal Little Cambridge landowners in 1688 (comprising 18.5 percent of taxpayers but contributing 36 percent of taxes), three served as Cambridge Selectmen (Samuel Champney for eleven years between 1681 and 1696, Nathaniel Sparhawk for twelve years between 1716 and 1730, and Thomas Oliver for one year in 1687). Oliver established the most impressive political record overall, however, holding the post of representative for 18 years between 1692 and 1713, before attaining the high post of Royal Council member in 1715, the last year of his life.<sup>52</sup>

Little Cambridge took its first small step toward self-determination in 1728, when its inhabitants established a schoolhouse at the crossroads that would afterwards be called Brighton Center. The funding was provided by local subscription. Here residents gathered to conduct public business in the years before the foundation of a local meetinghouse.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Paige, 440-444.

<sup>52</sup> Paige, 462-466 and 459.

<sup>53</sup> Frederick A. Whitney, "Brighton," in Samuel Drake, ed., History of Middlesex County, Massachusetts, vol. 1 (Boston, 1880) 287; Francis S. Drake, "Brighton in the Colonial Period," in Justin Winsor, ed., The Memorial History of Boston, vol. 1: 442.

A more important step was taken in 1734 when the community sought and was granted permission to hold local religious services during the winter months. Up to this time the residents of Little Cambridge had worshipped in either the First Church of Cambridge or the Church of Newton, depending on where they lived. The Dana and the Oliver families, for example, who resided at the western end of Little Cambridge, worshipped in Newton, while the Sparhawks and Gardners, who lived in the northern section of the community, worshipped across the river in Cambridge proper. The people of Little Cambridge at first held local religious meetings in a farmhouse, but soon outgrew this facility, and in 1738 established a committee to raise a fund for the construction of a meetinghouse adjacent to the schoolhouse. The largest subscriber to this fund was Captain Nathaniel Cunningham, the first Bostonian to establish a country estate in Little Cambridge. The Little Cambridge Meetinghouse, which was finally built in 1744, did not enjoy complete autonomy, however, since its members were still required to contribute to the upkeep of the parent church in Harvard Square.<sup>54</sup>

Doctrinal differences played no part in motivating the residents of Little Cambridge to establish a separate meetinghouse. If substantive doctrinal differences had existed separation might have come earlier, for as Michael Zuckerman has written, while New England towns strove for harmony, when they perceived consensus to be unattainable they were inclined to authorize separation, believing that "any discord that endangered the peace" was to be avoided.<sup>55</sup> Moreover outright separation was not the objective at the outset. A history of the church noted that the petitioners of 1734 had "no idea of separation

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<sup>54</sup> Paige, 294-296.

<sup>55</sup> Zuckerman, 140.

from the parent church...at that time; they expected to meet with their old associates when practicable, and probably any suggestion of complete alienation and independent action would have been condemned as worse than heresy, and stamped out as rebellion."<sup>56</sup>

By the late 1740s, however, the goal had changed to outright separation. In petitioning the General Court for complete autonomy in 1749, the residents of Little Cambridge contended that their community had reached a point of maturity warranting ecclesiastical independence.

There is within the bounds of the proposed new parish on the south side of the river,...2,660 acres and 81 rods of land, by the plan; 42 dwelling houses; about fifty families; above fifty persons in full communion with the church; and this part of town's proportion to the Province Tax in 1748 was £700.11s.8d., old tenor, and 67 ratable polls, about 290 souls.

Opposition to separation was so strong in Cambridge, however, that the General Court refused to accede. It rejected five appeals for independent ecclesiastical status between 1747 and 1774. Only in 1779, in the midst of the Revolution, and in the aftermath of the establishment of a regional cattle market in Little Cambridge, did the General Court finally relent, but even then four more years passed before the First Church of Cambridge voted a compliance on February 22, 1783.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> George B. Livermore, "Historical Paper," in The First Parish in Brighton: Historical Addresses (Boston, 1894) 34.

<sup>57</sup> Paige, 294-296.

While the local schoolhouse and meetinghouse provided Little Cambridge with an institutional framework that enhanced its sense of identity, the movement for local self-determination was as yet limited to the ecclesiastical realm. As long, in fact, as the economic interests of the south side community were reasonably compatible with those of Cambridge proper, the south siders were content with this limited amount of autonomy.

Little Cambridge was well-represented in town government in these years, always holding at least one seat on the Board of Selectmen, a body that usually comprised five members. In addition, its residents were often chosen to fill the town's only seat in the General Court, a Little Cambridge man holding the representative's seat during the years 1700 to 1713, 1769 to 1774, 1776, 1778, 1787 to 1788, and 1792 to 1793, or about one quarter of the time. Thomas Gardner, a resident of present-day Allston, was representative during the critical years just before the outbreak of the Revolution.<sup>58</sup>

In the era of the American Revolution an important new industry came to Little Cambridge, with profound long-term implications for the community. In 1776 two local residents, Jonathan Winship I and II, father and son, established a stockyard in Little Cambridge to serve as a collection point to supply the revolutionary army which was then headquartered across the Charles River in Cambridge proper. The Winships also gathered oxen to be used in transporting the army's stores and provisions.<sup>59</sup> The cattle yards were laid out on the grounds

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<sup>58</sup> Paige, 460-466; Winship, vol. 1: 37.

<sup>59</sup> Lee Nathaniel Newcomer, The Embattled Farmers: A Massachusetts Countryside in the American Revolution (New York: Columbia University, 1953) 110.

of the Bull's Head Tavern, about a quarter of a mile east of the village on the Watertown highway, a main thoroughfare which linked the community to the cattle raising district further west. The Winships put out a call to the farmers of the outlying areas to send their cattle on the hoof to the Little Cambridge stockyard. As the livestock arrived, they purchased and processed it for the army. This trade in cattle led to the establishment of many slaughterhouses in Little Cambridge, the largest being that of the Winship family.<sup>60</sup> As the records of the Continental Army show, by 1777 two Winship storehouses contained about 500 barrels of salted beef. So important was this supply, that the army posted soldiers to protect it against possible sabotage.<sup>61</sup>

The Winships quickly became the wealthiest family in Little Cambridge. In 1780 they built a large-scale residence at the eastern end of the village near the stockyards. "This Winship mansion," one source noted, "was in its day a house of much importance, and was surrounded by a large tract of highly cultivated land; besides rich, well-stocked pastures, on which browsed many varieties of fancy cattle."<sup>62</sup> By 1790 Jonathan Winship II (the elder Jonathan having died in 1784) was the largest meatpacker in Massachusetts, putting up some 5,000 barrels of beef a year for foreign markets alone.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Mrs. Solomon Jones [Mary Jane Kingsley Merwin], "Reminiscences," The Item, 2 October 1886: 4; Winship, vol. 1: 124-125.

<sup>61</sup> Letter of Charles Miller to Major General Heath, 22 June 1777, General William Heath Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

<sup>62</sup> Annie M. Judson, "A Thing of the Past: The Captain Jonathan Winship Mansion," The Item, 8 February 1890: 2.

<sup>63</sup> Victor S. Clark, History of Manufactures in the United States, vol. 1 (New York, Peter Smith, 1949) 482.

The transformation of Little Cambridge from an agricultural village to a market town did not occur smoothly, however. The war created an artificially high demand for meat, but the post-war economic climate was much less favorable. Samuel Eliot Morison has described the crisis of the 1781 to 1789 period as "the worst economic depression Massachusetts has ever known."<sup>64</sup> While economic conditions improved following the establishment of a stronger central government in 1789, and with the growing demand for American products occasioned by the outbreak of war in Europe in the early 1790s, Little Cambridge's commercial prosperity was far from secure. The greatest threat stemmed from Boston's developing transportation system.

In contrast to the pre-Revolutionary era, when the wealthy residents of Cambridge made their money entirely outside of the town, the wealthy men of the late 1780s and 1790s, recognizing the inherent advantages the town enjoyed by virtue of its proximity to Boston and as a link to points north and west of the city, invested heavily in various transportation ventures. The opening in 1793 of the West Boston Bridge, a major new transportation facility on the Charles River linking Cambridge and Boston, was an especially significant event. The Columbian Centinel of November 23, 1793 noted that "the elegance of its workmanship and the magnitude of the undertaking are perhaps unequalled in the history of enterprises." The private corporation that financed this new toll bridge, the Proprietors of the West Boston Bridge, was headed by Judge Francis

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<sup>64</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison, The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783-1860 (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1921) 30.

Dana, Cambridge's principal landowner, and a highly influential figure in state and national politics.<sup>65</sup>

The West Boston Bridge shortened the land route from Cambridge to Boston from eight to three miles, opened up a considerable portion of the eastern part of the town to development, and stimulated the construction of turnpikes that diverted traffic away from the old center at Harvard Square and thus away from the road to Boston that passed through Little Cambridge.

Before the construction of the West Boston Bridge the eastern end of Cambridge had been thinly populated. A contemporary described it as "a sort of insulated tract, detached from every other."<sup>66</sup> Only about 1,000 residents lived in Cambridge proper and the town was served by a mere twelve miles of roadway. Apart from Harvard College, the principal interest of the residents of the town was in agriculture.<sup>67</sup> The bridge corporation expected to profit not only from tolls but also from an increase of land values in the vicinity of the bridge. Despite some early problems, substantial growth occurred near the bridge in the dozen years that followed its opening. Then Robert Vose and Royal Makepeace, local developers, proposed establishing a port, a rival to Boston, on the Charles River mudflats near the bridge, to be called Cambridgeport, and proceeded to build canals, wharves and warehouses in the area. On January 11, 1805 the United States Congress designated Cambridgeport an official port of entry for

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<sup>65</sup> Lewis M. Hastings, "An Historical Account of Some Bridges Over the Charles River," Cambridge Historical Society Proceedings 7 (1919) 57-60.

<sup>66</sup> Cambridge Historical Commission, East Cambridge (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1988) 15.

<sup>67</sup> Lewis M. Hastings, "The Streets of Cambridge: Their Origins and History," Cambridge Historical Society Proceedings 7 (1919) 48.

foreign commerce. By 1806, the area contained a population of more than a thousand people and seemed destined to economically and politically outstrip the older sections of Cambridge.<sup>68</sup> As the population of the eastern part of Cambridge grew after 1793, the political influence of the other parts of Cambridge diminished correspondingly.

The opening of the West Boston Bridge marked a major turning point in the political history of Cambridge. The bridge corporation enjoyed strong support from Cambridge town government and competing interests found it increasingly difficult to obtain services. As noted above, Little Cambridge had been well-represented in Cambridge town government over the years. After 1793, however, its influence declined dramatically. In contrast to the 1784 to 1793 period, when south side residents held 26 percent of the town's Selectmen seats, Little Cambridge's representation in the years 1794 to 1805 fell to just 15 percent. And whereas residents of Little Cambridge had frequently represented the town in the General Court in the earlier period, no resident was elected to that office in any year after the opening of the bridge in 1793.<sup>69</sup>

Little Cambridge's cattle dealers and slaughterhouse proprietors recognized the danger this bridge posed to their well-being. In 1792, while the West Boston Bridge incorporation bill was still being considered by the General Court, Little Cambridge's leaders had joined Newton in a remonstrance. It said nothing about the community's deepest concern, the deterioration of the bridges and roads servicing the south side of the river and consequent loss of traffic, but

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<sup>68</sup> Sutton, 40-41.

<sup>69</sup> Paige, 460-466.

merely asserted that the proposed bridge would create another "obstruction to the navigation of the Charles River, to which [the petitioners] conceive they have a natural right" and that it would "greatly depreciate the property on said river." The remonstrance also contended that "no public advantage will be derived from the measure to compensate the private injuries that will be sustained." The signers of this remonstrance included Colonel Stephen Dana, Jonathan Winship II, Moses Robbins, Nathaniel Champney, Moses Griggs, and Edward Sparhawk, all major Little Cambridge landholders and businessmen. The only important Little Cambridge resident to sign the petition supporting the West Boston Bridge was Samuel Sparhawk, who owned much property near the river, and whose family was one of three that had been specifically exempted from the provisions of the 1779 act establishing a separate parish in Little Cambridge.<sup>70</sup>

As the leaders of Little Cambridge perceived the situation, the proposed bridge threatened to destroy the community's economy, now firmly based on the cattle trade. Prior to 1793 the only continuous route linking Cambridge with the south side of the Charles River had been that by way of the Great Bridge, linking Harvard Square with Little Cambridge. Since it was difficult, dangerous, and expensive to transport livestock by ferry, cattle on the hoof approached Boston by way of Little Cambridge.<sup>71</sup>

The lack of attention given the upkeep of this key facility after 1793 reflected the south side's community's declining political influence in the town. The Great Bridge had been totally reconstructed in 1733. The political and

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<sup>70</sup> Massachusetts General Court, Acts of 1792, Chapter 87, Legislative Packet.

<sup>71</sup>Paige, 197.

economic troubles of the Revolutionary and Confederation periods led to the neglect of the structure, however, and by 1790 it again stood in need of extensive repair. The cost of maintaining the facility was shared by the towns of Cambridge and Lexington in proportion to their respective valuations. In June 1793 several Little Cambridge residents, under the leadership of Moses Griggs, a farmer who owned land on the road to the Great Bridge, petitioned the Cambridge town government for "a thorough repair of the causeway leading to Cambridge old bridge." However, no action was taken on this petition until 1796, when the town asked the General Court to authorize "a lottery to raise so much money as shall be sufficient for an effectual repair" making the span "passable at all times in safety."<sup>72</sup> Two years later the town ordered "the Selectmen to procure and place a sufficient number of posts on the causeway as soon as may be, and that further consideration of the report be postponed to next March meeting." Not until 1800 was the sum of \$1,000 appropriated for the repair of the causeway.<sup>73</sup>

Colonel Stephen Dana led the opposition to the West Boston Bridge proposal. Dana was a major Little Cambridge landowner and the most important political figure in Little Cambridge in the post-Revolutionary era. He lived at the extreme western end of Little Cambridge, supporting himself by farming and butchering. His attentiveness to Little Cambridge's political and economic interests is evidenced by his 1822 epitaph which describes him as "a prudent, pleasant friend, the father, legislator, judge and peacemaker of Brighton,

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<sup>72</sup> Cambridge, Office of the City Clerk, Town Records: 20 June 1796.

<sup>73</sup> Cambridge, Office of the City Clerk, Town Records: 5 November 1798 and 12 June 1800.

extensively useful and greatly beloved by all who knew him."<sup>74</sup> Dana was Cambridge's representative in the General Court when the West Boston Bridge proposal was presented, and it was through him, presumably, that the Little Cambridge-Newton remonstrance reached the floor of the House of Representatives. Cambridge proper and the towns to the north and west of the river supported the West Boston Bridge proposal, while Little Cambridge, Brookline, Newton, and Roxbury, the towns on the river's south side, objected vigorously. By placing himself in opposition to a powerful bridge company that enjoyed strong public support, Dana seriously damaged his political standing in Cambridge. It is no coincidence therefore that the year of the opening of the West Boston Bridge---1793---also marked the end of his career as a representative from Cambridge.<sup>75</sup>

There was substantial support for the bridge building proposal in Cambridge proper. Its projectors were Cambridge men with deep roots in the community. They owned most of the eastern part of Cambridge. As Henry Binford has written,

With good reason, the five principals called themselves the Cambridgeport "proprietors," since they owned most of eastern Cambridge. On their own they were able to survey streets and lots, to build an elaborate network of canals, and to drain and dike scores of acres of marshland. From 1793 to 1807 their work enjoyed the collective blessing of the town. They built three bridge approaches (Main Street, Mount Auburn Street, and Harvard Street), and the town obligingly made them public roads. They donated land and money for a new meetinghouse; the town created a second parish. They

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<sup>74</sup> Winship, vol. I: 200

<sup>75</sup> Dana, 226-227; Winship, vol. 1: 200.

sought an act of Congress making their town a port of delivery; the town supported their application.<sup>76</sup>

The political situation grew more complicated in 1804 with the emergence of Andrew Craigie's Canal Bridge proposal and the beginning of a fierce rivalry between the two major Cambridge bridge corporations. In contrast to the West Boston Bridge promoters, Craigie (though a Cambridge resident) was an outsider and his principal backers were Boston Federalists rather than Cambridge landowners. The focus of Craigie's interest was the development of Lechmere Point, or East Cambridge, by the construction of another bridge from that point to Boston.

In 1806, Little Cambridge elaborated its strategy for saving the local cattle industry. The south side now added to the demand that the Great Bridge be properly maintained a petition to build a second link to Cambridge---a road and bridge "from near the store of Jonathan Winship [close by the cattle market] through the lands of Edward Sparhawk, S. W. Pomeroy and Thomas Gardner" and across the Charles River to Cambridgeport. The road in question (the present Cambridge Street) was desired by the cattle interests for two reasons: it would afford farmers coming from the north better access to the Little Cambridge Cattle Market, and also provide the first link in a thoroughfare that they hoped would eventually give Little Cambridge more direct access to Cambridgeport and the road to the West Boston Bridge. Cambridge's refusal to authorize construction of this roadway was the proximate cause of separation.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Binford, 25-26.

<sup>77</sup> Cambridge, Office of the City Clerk, Town Records: 12 January 1806.

In February 1806, sixty-seven residents of Little Cambridge signed a petition asking "that all the inhabitants of...Cambridge on the south side of the Charles River, may be incorporated as a distinct and separate town." The petitioners cited two major reasons for making the request: (1) the distances involved, especially the difficulty and danger of crossing the Charles River in bad weather; and, (2) a growing dissimilarity between Cambridge and Little Cambridge. It was the section dealing with the growing dissimilarity that revealed Little Cambridge's deepest concerns.

To considerations [of distance] your petitioners conceive additional weight to be given by the changes which have taken place and are still to be expected in the relative state of the town, since the creation of West Boston Bridge; the number of inhabitants in the other parishes has rapidly increased, and objects of enterprise have engrossed and are engrossing their attention, alike irrelevant to the pursuits and advantage of your petitioners. Your petitioners therefore apprehend that the sameness which once proved a common bond of union and rendered it proper that they should make a part of the corporate body to which they have hitherto belonged, no more exists. (emphasis mine)

The increase in the population of the other parishes refers plainly to the emergence of Cambridgeport as a major population center. The reference to "changes which have taken place and are still to be expected" alludes to the canal bridge project of Andrew Craigie, which would, of course, result in further development of the eastern end of Cambridge, thereby compounding the political problems of Little Cambridge. "The objects of enterprise that have engrossed and are engrossing" the other parishes, "attention alike irrelevant to the pursuits and advantage of your petitioners," refers to the struggle between the bridge corporations for the creation of a transportation network serving their particular

economic interests, an unequal struggle that was drawing traffic away from Little Cambridge.

The petitioners concluded their appeal with the observation:

Being sufficiently numerous to enjoy all the immunities of a civil corporation [your petitioners] conceive that the time has now arrived when the separation which nature seems to have dictated by the course of the river which runs between them and their brethren, may equitably receive the sanction of a Legislative Act, and when they may hope to conduct their affairs free from the inconvenience and difficulty to which they have long been subject. Under these impressions and views, without wishing to influence the right of any, perfectly willing to bear the just proportion of the taxes of the town, and cheerfully consenting that as Christian worshippers, Moses Griggs, Thomas Gardner, and Samuel Sparhawk, should continue, while they choose, to enjoy all the benefits of an act of your Former Legislature attaching them to the First Parish in Cambridge, Your Petitioners pray, that all the inhabitants of said Cambridge on the south side of Charles River, may be incorporated as a distinct and separate town.<sup>78</sup>

Here the petitioners fell back on the geographical arguments for separation. A major river and several hundred acres of tidal marshes divided Little Cambridge from Cambridge proper, which imposed much "inconvenience and difficulty" on the south side residents when attending to town business. They also emphasized both their capacity and willingness to meet the costs of independent status and assured the General Court that they would respect the rights (conferred by the 1779 act that established an independent church in Little Cambridge) of three families residing in the the northern section of the community to continue their association with the First Parish Church of Cambridge.

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<sup>78</sup> Massachusetts General Court, Acts of 1806, Chapter 65, Legislative Packet.

Postponing action on the petition until the next General Court, the lawmakers required its publication in two Boston newspapers for three successive weeks so "that all persons interested may then appear, and shew cause, if any they have, why the prayer of said petition should not be granted."<sup>79</sup> Significantly, Cambridge raised no objection whatever to the proposed separation. While Boston had objected to the secession of Muddy River in 1705 because it was reluctant to lose the revenues that its satellite furnished, Cambridge in 1807 was waxing prosperous owing to the various bridge-related development projects then underway. Land values and tax income were on the rise in Cambridge. A battle between two rival bridge-building interests, the Proprietors of the West Boston Bridge and Andrew Craigie's and associates, provided Little Cambridge and West Cambridge (Arlington) with a window of opportunity. Since neither community was especially well-served by these projects, and would presumably use whatever power they still wielded in Cambridge politics to oppose both bridge interests, it was in the mutual interest of the bridge companies (one dominant in town meetings and the other influential in the General Court) to cut adrift these satellites, with their distinct transportation needs. No opposition to separation having materialized in Cambridge, on February 24, 1807 the General Court authorized the establishment of the independent Town of Brighton.<sup>80</sup>

If Little Cambridge separated in 1807 in order to protect its vital economic interests, as has been suggested, then the actions taken by the Town of Brighton

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<sup>79</sup> Massachusetts General Court, Acts of 1806, Chapter 65, Legislative Packet.

<sup>80</sup> Paige, 188.

after 1807 should reflect that objective. Brighton's first town meeting was held on March 9, 1807. Colonel Stephen Dana was chosen Moderator, and a cousin, Henry Dana, became the first Town Clerk. The members of the first Board of Selectmen were Nathaniel Champney, Jonathan Livermore, Dudley Hardy, Benjamin Hill and Thomas Gardner, Jr. Colonel Dana also became representative. While all of these men were farmers, one must remember that most farmers engaged in some butchering and were therefore concerned to promote the interests of the cattle trade.<sup>81</sup>

While no member of the Winship family, the founders of the local cattle trade, served on the original Board of Selectmen, that family continued to wield great influence in the community. In 1807, the Winships were preoccupied with their far flung business interests. Jonathan Winship II, the founder of the Brighton cattle market and the patriarch of the family, was sixty years old and in failing health. His eldest son, Abiel, had moved to Boston in 1800, where he had become a prosperous shipowner and Pacific trade merchant. Jonathan's younger sons, Nathan and Jonathan III, were commanding ships in the Pacific northwest. The only son living at home in 1807, Francis, a future state senator, was only twenty-two years of age at the time.<sup>82</sup> While no one bearing the surname Winship served in Brighton's first town government, one of the original

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<sup>81</sup>Brighton Town Records, Box 1: 9 March 1807.

<sup>82</sup> Winship, vol. 1: 124-131; The 1820 census was the first to classify the residents of Little Cambridge by occupation. At that time 66 percent of Brighton's work force consisted of agriculturalists (a figure which presumably included most of the town's slaughterhouse proprietors and butchers), 20 percent were engaged in commercial pursuits, while the remaining 14 percent engaged in manufacturing.

Selectmen, Benjamin Hill, was a Winship on his mother's side, while Town Clerk Henry Dana, was related to the Winships through marriage.<sup>83</sup>

This preoccupation with business was to be a salient characteristic of Brighton's life for decades to come. Reverend John Foster, Brighton's mild-mannered Unitarian minister, took note of this preoccupation with business affairs in 1809 in his dedicatory sermon for the new meetinghouse, chastising those of his parishioners who "have no just conception of the sacredness either of time or place...who engage without reluctance in the dicussion of secular topics, and often communicate intelligence and make arrangements of a business nature at the very threshold of the sanctuary," and who sometimes, "not content with the frivolous conversation and behavior abroad...carry the same spirit within the consecrated walls."<sup>84</sup>

The most important issue facing Brighton town government in this period was, of course, the community's relationship to the network of roads and bridges that connected Boston to its hinterland. Brighton's first appropriation, authorized at its second town meeting on April 6, 1807, was for highway maintenance. On March 1 and May 2 1808 the town authorized the Board of Selectmen to proceed with two critically important road building projects that would help reinforce the town's position as the leading cattle market outside Boston: (1) The proposed road from Winship's store to the Charles River (Cambridge Street); and (2) The "straightening" of the road from Colonel Dana's place to Cambridge.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Winship, vol, 1: 211; J. P. C. Winship, Historical Brighton, vol. 2 (Boston, 1902) 178.

<sup>84</sup> Livermore, 46.

<sup>85</sup>Brighton Town Records, vol 1: 34, 37, 38, 55 and 66-67.

Selectman Thomas Gardner, Jr. was so anxious to have the first of these projects carried out---anticipating no doubt that the projected highway would increase the value of his acreage---that he offered to pay the cost of the section crossing his land, nearly one half mile in extent, "and to make all the fence...free from any expense to the town."<sup>86</sup> Though the building of Cambridge Street entailed considerable expense for Brighton, the project was completed with great speed and harmony.

While the maintenance of the Great Bridge continued to be of concern, much more of the town's time and energy was now devoted to a proposal to construct a toll bridge at the foot of Cambridge Street that would connect with the network of roads feeding into the West Boston Bridge. On March 2, 1808, Jonathan Loring Austin of Cambridge, Samuel W. Pomeroy of Brighton, and four other "real estate owners" were incorporated as the Cambridgeport Bridge Corporation for the purpose of constructing this bridge.<sup>87</sup> In their June 1807 petition requesting incorporation, the projectors described the anticipated benefits:

That the communications between the said town of Brighton and Newton, as well as of the towns to the west and southwest thereof with Boston, may be greatly shortened and facilitated by a bridge over said river...; that a considerable portion of the people who live in the vicinity of said river, and on the southwestern side thereof, would save nearly half the distance of the present travelled road; and that not only would the individual petitioners and towns abovementioned be accomodated by the proposed Bridge and Road, but likewise the whole of the western and southwestern parts of the state

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<sup>86</sup> Brighton Town Records, vol. 1: 55.

<sup>87</sup> Massachusetts General Court, Acts of 1808, Chapter 73.

would be brought more than a mile nearer to the market, by that than any other road now in existence.<sup>88</sup>

Brighton's deep interest in this project was evidenced as early as September 28, 1807 when it directed its Selectmen "to wait on the General Court Committee while passing through this town, and give them any information respecting the Bridge or Bridges, prayed for over Charles River as far as it respects the Town of Brighton."<sup>89</sup>

The Brighton and Cambridgeport Bridge project was undertaken primarily for the advantage of the Proprietors of the West Boston Bridge and the owners of real estate in Cambridgeport, but Brighton stood to gain as well. Brighton in fact gave much more support to the project than did Cambridge. Significantly no Brighton names appeared on the January 12, 1808 petition opposing the bridge. The opposition, led by rival bridge builder Andrew Craigie, was centered entirely in Cambridge.<sup>90</sup>

Brighton, by contrast, not only declared its support but offered to assume one half of the cost of future repairs of the structure "after it is well built." A committee consisting of Pomeroy and several other prominent residents was appointed to negotiate an agreement with the bridge corporation. Though the owners refused to accede to all of the town's conditions, an acceptable

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<sup>88</sup> Massachusetts General Court, Acts of 1808, Chapter 73, Legislative Packet.

<sup>89</sup> Brighton Town Records, vol. 1: 38.

<sup>90</sup> Paige, 200; Massachusetts General Court, Acts of 1808, Chapter 73, Legislative Packet.

arrangement was at length reached and the Brighton and Cambridgeport Bridge opened for travel in late 1810.<sup>91</sup>

Other Cambridge development schemes threatened the economic vitality of Brighton as well. The activities of East Cambridge developer Andrew Craigie and his powerful associates were a continuing source of anxiety. Craigie was projecting new roads that threatened to divert even more traffic from the old highway to Boston. As a Middlesex County town, Brighton was also understandably upset when the developer proposed moving the county jail and courthouse, then conveniently located in Harvard Square, to Lechmere Point in East Cambridge.<sup>92</sup>

Most disturbing of all, however, were attempts to displace Brighton as the principal center of the cattle trade. In 1818, the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture (MSPA) announced in the Massachusetts Agricultural Journal that it had collected sufficient money to "erect a suitable edifice...with a view to giving better accomodation to ingenious artists, who are inventors of machines and implements for agricultural purposes, and of affording a better place to display our domestic manufactures," and that this exhibition hall would be constructed on the grounds of its annual cattle show. The trustees, the notice went on to say, "have unanimously decided to fix the show at Brighton [where it had been held annually since 1816], though the proprietors at Lechmere Point have liberally tendered them accomodation at that settlement." The directors had

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<sup>91</sup> Brighton Town Records, vol. 2: 122; Paige, 200; Hastings, "Some Bridges Over the Charles River," 61.

<sup>92</sup> Cambridge Historical Commission, East Cambridge, 19-29; Brighton Town Records, vol. 2: 188.

chosen Brighton, the notice continued, because of "the greater distance from town and the consequent accomodation to the country, as well as avoiding too much bustle and noise."<sup>93</sup>

The decision, however, was much more involved than this straightforward announcement suggests. Lengthy negotiations between Brighton and the MSPA preceded the decision. These negotiations began as early as May 1817, when the MSPA wrote the Brighton Board of Selectmen stating that while a majority of its directors favored the Brighton location, the Society had in past years "laboured under many inconveniences arising as well from the want of suitable conveniences as from the defect of regulation which it is in the power of the town and its officers to make and strictly enforce." The MSPA then laid out its requirements. In addition to cooperation from the town in the matter of regulation, it asked for the gift of a parcel of land. If Brighton wanted to become the permanent seat of the annual cattle show, the association submitted, "we suggest the expediency...of stating to the Trustees or their Committee what they can expect as to the accomodation in land and what permanent regulations will be made to secure order and regularity in their proceedings." If Brighton were unwilling to give the required guarantees, the MSPA would be obliged to locate the show elsewhere---in East Cambridge, Roxbury, Charlestown, Watertown or Brookline. "It is probable that the new corporation at Sewall's Point [the Boston & Roxbury Mill Dam Corporation] will cheerfully furnish a spot gratis, with a view

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<sup>93</sup> Massachusetts Agricultural Journal 5 (July 1818): 199-200.

to aiding their proposed bridge or causeway," the MSPA declared, by way of a specific alternative to Brighton.<sup>94</sup>

Recognizing that the loss of the cattle show would damage the local cattle industry, Brighton gave the MSPA all the guarantees it had requested, including,

a lot of land...centrally situated as it respects the public houses,...and that half an acre at least should be conveyed to the Trustees in fee simple for their buildings either on the public highway, or with a convenient way to the same for the use of the Trustees, and also the use for one week at least in the month of October so long as the cattle show shall be kept in the town of at least four acres of permanent grass or pasture ground to be located adjoining the lot of the Trustees...for the purpose of erecting pens for cattle...., the said last to be under the absolute control of the Trustees during said week.

Brighton also ordered its "town officers of all descriptions to cooperate in preserving order during the show." It likewise agreed to "establish and enforce such regulations as the law may permit for this purpose and if necessary...apply to the legislature for an enlargement of [its] powers to make by-laws and regulations which may from time to time be found necessary for the orderly management of said show."<sup>95</sup>

The town's eagerness to retain the cattle show evidenced itself also in the care it took in selecting a permanent site. Samuel W. Pomeroy, owner of the Bull's Head Tavern, wanted the exhibition hall and grounds established adjacent to his hostelry close by the old cattle market site and so offered one half acre on either side of the tavern so long as the show was held in Brighton. The town

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<sup>94</sup> Brighton, Town Records, vol. 2: 263.

<sup>95</sup> Brighton Town Records, vol. 2: 265-268.

rejected this offer, however, noting that "as every eye has been directed to a field owned by Mr. A. Winship fronting the public house [of Mr. Fuller] as being the most eligible situation, within the limits of the town," it would do its best to procure that parcel.<sup>96</sup>

The town fathers had little difficulty persuading Abiel Winship to grant the MSPA one half acre of land on the crest of the hill for the construction of its exhibition hall, and the use of six adjacent acres for its annual cattle show. Winship, the eldest son of the co-founder of the cattle market, had inherited the bulk of his father's estate in 1814. The land in question, later called Agricultural Hill, was located on the south side of Brighton Center. The largest public tavern in the town faced it across the Watertown Highway (Washington Street). It was an ideal location.<sup>97</sup>

Through such vigorous measures the Town of Brighton secured to itself an annual fair that buttressed its position as the great cattle market of New England. The Brighton Fair and Cattle Show, as it was styled, was a major event of the period. Farmers converged on the fair from all over southern New England. So many came that Brighton at first had difficulty accomodating them.

The town hall proved to be too small for the formal exercises; and these, attended by the Governor and other distinguished guests, were then and thereafter held in the meeting-house, where the President's address was delivered and the Secretary's address read. The society and its guests dined in the village tavern, and listened to the various toasts and "sentiments." ...Many of the 4,000 present came from New Hampshire, and more than six hundred carriages stood in the streets of the village, where huckster's booths gave a holiday aspect to the occasion. The town hall was used for the exhibition of agricultural implements and vegetables. In 1817

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<sup>96</sup> Brighton Town Records, vol 2: 266.

<sup>97</sup> Winship, vol 1: 126.

there were sixty cattle pens, and a Boston paper editorially reported the show "splendid and gratifying."<sup>98</sup>

The MSPA Fair and Cattle Show was held in Brighton annually until its suspension in 1835, coinciding with a period of rapid expansion for the local cattle industry. By the 1820s the Brighton Cattle Market was receiving between two and eight thousand head of cattle every Monday, with the traffic on the roads to Brighton assuming such proportions that the clergymen of the country towns complained of "the noise and confusion of Autumnal Sabbath in Middlesex...the lowing of herds, the bleating of flocks, the resounding lash, and the drover's voice and whistle, discordantly mingled with the songs of the temple."<sup>99</sup> In 1828 the New England Farmer estimated the value of cattle sold at Brighton, principally for slaughter, over less than two months at \$540,000.<sup>100</sup> Herds of livestock converged on Brighton from every direction, even from Brookline. "Brighton was the chief market for livestock in New England," a Brookline historian wrote of the impact of the cattle trade on that town, "and it was a common sight to see herds of cattle, and occasionally of sheep, driven through Brookline Village and up Washington Street to Brighton. Starting down in Rhode Island with a few head, cattle were picked up from farmers along the road so that the herd was at its maximum through Brookline."<sup>101</sup> Thus Brighton used its newly acquired

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<sup>98</sup> An Outline of the History of the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture (Boston: Meador Publishing Company, 1942) 16-17.

<sup>99</sup> Charles Briggs, A Discourse Delivered at Concord, October the Fifth, 1825 (Concord, 1825) 23-24; Jeremiah Spofford, A Gazeteer of Massachusetts, Containing a General View of the State (Newburyport, 1828) 166.

<sup>100</sup> Massachusetts Agricultural Journal 10 (January 1831): 1.

<sup>101</sup> James Driscoll, "Industry in Brookline," Proceedings of the Brookline Historical Society for 1952 (Brookline: Brookline Historical Society, 1952) 12.

corporate authority to protect and promote the town's primary industry, the cattle trade. Political independence enabled it to respond vigorously to economic perils that it might otherwise have been powerless to meet.

While Brookline experienced significant change in the 1775 to 1830 period, the changes in no way altered the town's essential character as an agricultural community. Its population tripled, its dependence upon commercial farming increased, and transportation improvements brought burgeoning Boston closer, fostering a measure of commercial development at the crossroad location known as the Punch Bowl Village.<sup>102</sup> By contrast with Brighton, however, the development Brookline experienced in the 1790 to 1830 period exhibited a fundamental continuity. Farming continued to be the principal activity there, just as it had been in the pre-Revolutionary era. Thus while other peripheral towns were developing what Henry Binford has labelled a "fringe economy," deriving their vitality from "performing chores that had to be done just outside the city: assembling, storing, preparing, and transporting goods for the urban market," Brookline remained almost exclusively agricultural in economic character.

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<sup>102</sup> As a major crossroads, the point of convergence of the roads to Worcester, Watertown, and Cambridge, this location became a stopping place for travelers at an early date. The construction there of the Punch Bowl Tavern in 1717 bears testimony to its importance. After 1783, when stagecoach service was instituted along the Sherborn (Worcester) Road, the tavern served as a point of departure. The construction in 1806-07 of an improved road to Worcester (the Worcester Turnpike), increased its importance. Early Brookline Village was centered around this popular tavern. With the construction of new roads and bridges to Boston after 1820, however, the tavern lost much of its importance and was razed in 1833. Curtis, 190-191.

By 1830 Brookline and Brighton, communities quite similar in socio-economic character prior to 1776, had developed in strikingly different ways---the one a market town, deeply committed to fostering its principal industry, the cattle and slaughtering trades, the other a farming town, untouched by industry, a location ideally suited for elite suburban development.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THE TRANSPORTATION REVOLUTION**

In the period 1820 to 1860 the transportation network connecting Boston to its hinterland expanded significantly. The growth of this network came in two major stages: (1) the construction of new roads, turnpikes, and bridges, mostly prior to 1830, and (2) the establishment of regularly scheduled public transportation facilities (omnibuses, railroads, and horsecar lines) in the post 1830 period.

Brookline and Brighton utilized the expanding transportation network quite differently, however. Improved transportation did not lead to significant social or economic changes in Brookline until the coming of rail passenger service in 1848. The same patterns of development that had characterized the town in the 18th century continued to exert themselves there in the first half of the nineteenth century---the production, on the one hand, of fruit, vegetables and other farm goods for Boston's expanding population; on the other, the establishment of country estates by wealthy Bostonians, who were attracted to the western suburb by its convenience, splendid scenery, lack of commercial activity and already substantial social prestige. Changing conditions in Boston---especially the expansion of the business district into residential neighborhoods and a sudden increase in the city's immigrant population---gave elite families additional incentives to flee to the nearby countryside. While the construction of better roads certainly made the trip to Brookline more convenient, improved transportation facilities were never the determining factor.

Nor did Boston's elite families find all sections of Brookline equally attractive. They tended to establish themselves in two fairly compact areas of the town---the elevated southcentral section, through which the old Sherborn Road (Walnut Street) and neighboring Warren, Cottage and Goddard Streets passed (a section we will call Gardner Hill) and the extreme northeast corner of town, the so-called Longwood/ Cottage Farm district. Both of these preferred neighborhoods lay within relatively easy commuting distance of Boston.

Gardner Hill developed much earlier than the Longwood-Cottage Farm area. In the period 1795 to 1860 this neighborhood emerged as the most elegant elite enclave near Boston, a location that offered its residents sweeping vistas and social homogeneity at a convenient distance from the city. Its topography was well-suited for the establishment of an exclusive enclave, for it stood above and apart from the town's commercial center (Brookline Village) and its main transportation arteries (Washington Street, Harvard Street, and the Worcester Turnpike), enjoying a kind of splendid isolation. Despite its physical separateness, however, the Gardner Hill district was still quite near Boston, less than six miles from the commercial downtown--barely an hour's commuting time by private conveyance.

William B. Tappan, on visiting his old home in that neighborhood in 1840, paid the following poetic tribute to this suburban enclave:

Fancy deem  
Thy sweet retreat excused the common doom  
Caused by the fall; as if the Architect  
Were willing, by such specimen, to show  
What Eden, in its primal beauty was.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Brookline, Jamaica Plain and West Roxbury Directory for 1868

In a similar vein, Brookline publisher Bradford Kingman wrote of a visiting preacher who, "after regaling himself in the beautiful grove behind the First Church [on Walnut Street], in the course of his sermon said, 'I know not, my friends, how you can help being Christians, for you already live in paradise.'"<sup>2</sup>

Mary W. Poor, daughter of the Reverend John Pierce, longtime minister of the First Church, wrote of the Brookline of the 1820s, "We were so accustomed to hearing our town called 'beautiful Brookline,' that we almost fancied the adjective to be a part of its real name."<sup>3</sup>

The appeal of Gardner Hill was further enhanced in 1848 by construction of the twenty-two acre Brookline Reservoir. An 1868 description of the reservoir and its environs noted that it was "enclosed with a beautiful granite wall and a gate house of iron and stone, with walks around the entire pond, which in summer is bordered with a green grass lawn. This piece of mechanism is a great resort for visitors, and the surroundings being the best that can be found in the vicinity of Boston, makes it a prominent pleasure drive."<sup>4</sup>

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(Boston: 1868) 26.

<sup>2</sup> Kingman, 858.

<sup>3</sup> Mary W. Poor, "Recollections of Brookline: A Paper Read Before the Society, May 27, 1903," Proceedings of the Brookline Historical Society for 1903 (Brookline: Brookline Historical Society, 1903) 16.

<sup>4</sup> The Brookline, Jamaica Plain and West Roxbury Directory for 1868, 25; Eugene C. Hultman, "History of the Boston Water Supply," Proceedings of the Bostonian Society, Annual Meeting, January 20, 1948 (Boston: Bostonian Society, 1948) 43.

Among the first Bostonians to locate in the Gardner Hill neighborhood were the Cabots, Higginsons, Masons, and Perkinses, families of great wealth and social prestige. Three of the early residents, George Cabot, Stephen Higginson, and Jonathan Mason, were members of the so-called Essex Junto, an ultra-conservative faction that dominated the Massachusetts Federalist Party---a group, Samuel Eliot Morison has noted, "composed chiefly of hard-headed merchant-shipowners and lawyers of Essex County who had moved to Boston."<sup>5</sup>

These high Federalists were social conservatives. Landscape historian John R. Stilgoe has written of this class: "Not in Farms, not in villages, but in a new sort of space, the country seat, did a new sort of American flaunt a dislike of change and unrest." By establishing themselves in the countryside such men identified themselves with the prevailing agrarian ideology and thereby buttressed their social and political status.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The Federalists, followers of Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton, believed in a broad application of the powers of the central government, supported financial policies that enriched creditors, and favored a foreign policy of peace with Britain that would protect the interests of the nation's merchant-shipowners. The opposition, the Republicans, under the leadership of Thomas Jefferson, advocated limited government, lower taxes, and viewed the Federalist's financial program with deep suspicion. Support for the Republicans tended to be concentrated among the urban working classes and in agricultural regions. It should be emphasized, however, that political affiliations depended as much on personal friendships and contacts as they did on class or sectional identities. Brookline and Brighton were both Federalist strongholds. Samuel Eliot Morison, Harrison Gray Otis, 1765-1848: The Urbane Federalist (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969) 84.

<sup>6</sup> E. Digby Baltzell, Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia: Two Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Class Authority and Leadership (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979) 199; John R. Stilgoe, Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb, 1820-1939 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988) 95.

George Cabot, wealthy Boston merchant and United States Senator from 1791 to 1796, acquired his Brookline country estate, Green Hill, located on Warren Street, in 1795. As Henry Cabot Lodge noted of his grandfather's move to Brookline: "The fashion of retirement to a country place, or farm, was much more common in those days, when traditions and customs of England still lingered in the community." Lodge described Green Hill as "secluded and solitary. The farm covered the slopes of a hill and stretched far away over lands now [in 1877] thickly dotted with modern villas."<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Mason, a leading Boston attorney, United States Senator from 1800 to 1803, and one of the developers of Boston's Beacon Hill, purchased a Gardner Hill estate from Moses White about 1800.<sup>8</sup> The third member of this Federalist triumvirate, Stephen Higginson, an immensely wealthy Boston merchant and shipowner, also acquired an estate in the same vicinity about 1800, constructing a large and elegant residence on the thirteen acre property near the intersection of Warren and Heath Streets.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Henry Cabot Lodge, Life and Letters of George Cabot (Boston, 1877) 69; Curtis, 186-187; Kingman, 857-858; Boston Evening Transcript, 9 August 1886: 1.

<sup>8</sup> Kingman, 857.

<sup>9</sup> The Higginson estate was later acquired by Dr. John Collins Warren (1778-1856), one of the founders of the Massachusetts General Hospital, a pioneer in medical education, and the first physician to use ether in a surgical operation. A son-in-law of Mason, Warren was a long-time member of the Massachusetts Agricultural Society who engaged in experimental farming on his Brookline estate. Kingman, 857; The Brookline, Jamaica Plain and West Roxbury Directory for 1868, 24-25; "John Collins Warren," Dictionary of American Biography, 1936 ed.

The owners of these country estates were often deeply interested in horticulture and gardening. They exemplified what Stilgoe has labelled "avocational horticulture," quite different in object from the entrepreneurial variety carried on so extensively in Brighton after 1820. The goal of the avocational horticulturalist was moral uplift---a cleansing of the spirit---rather than mere moneymaking.<sup>10</sup>

Probably the most important of Brookline's early 19th century newcomers was Thomas Handasyd Perkins, the leading China trade merchant of his day, who in 1799 purchased a sixty-seven acre property on Cottage Street. According to horticultural historian Marshall P. Wilder, Perkins immediately "began to build a house, to lay out his grounds, to erect greenhouses and glass structures for the cultivation of fruits and flowers," which "until the establishment of the magnificent conservatories and fruit-houses of his nephew, John Perkins Cushing at Watertown, were considered the most advanced in horticultural science of any in New England." Extraordinary efforts went into the construction and landscaping of this property, which was not ready for occupancy until 1806. Perkins' brothers and business partners, James and Samuel, also moved to the Gardner Hill district in the early years of the century. Later still, two of his sons-in-law, the merchant Samuel Cabot and lawyer William H. Gardiner, purchased nearby estates.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Stilgoe, 107.

<sup>11</sup> Marshall P. Wilder, "The Horticulture of Boston and Vicinity," in Justin Winsor, The Memorial History of Boston, 1630-1880, vol. 4 (Boston, 1883) 625; Theodore F. Jones, Land Ownership in Brookline, From the First Settlement (Brookline: Brookline Historical Society, 1923) map VIII.

Most of these early 19th century arrivals occupied their Brookline properties on a seasonal basis, maintaining a primary residence in Boston. Thomas Handasyd Perkins built several city mansions, two on Pearl Street, in 1799 and 1810, and a third on Temple Place in 1810.<sup>12</sup>

Another wealthy Boston merchant who located in the Gardner Hill district in the early 1800s was Nathaniel Goddard. Born in Brookline in 1767, Goddard left home at age thirteen to make his fortune. As early as 1802 he acquired an interest in Boston's Rowe's Wharf and in 1816 began shipbuilding. At one time Goddard controlled the Boston market for Russian and Manila hemp. Maintaining a primary residence in the city, on Kingston Street, then one of its better neighborhoods, Goddard used a two-wheel chaise to commute to his country house in Brookline. Other members of the Goddard family also built homes on or near the old homestead on Goddard Avenue. These included Nathaniel's sons, Nathaniel, Jr. and Samuel, and a nephew, A. W. Goddard.<sup>13</sup>

Boston's elite moved out to Brookline for its scenery and salubrious climate and for the opportunity it afforded for exercise. The following passage from the diary of Edward Atkinson, whose father Amos moved to Brookline in 1822, reflects the elite's view of the town in the early 1800s:

When my father moved from Boston to Brookline, it was a little country town. The inhabitants were almost all farmers; there were a few merchants who lived out of Boston in order to get the air and exercise in riding or

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<sup>12</sup> Some Merchants and Sea Captains of Old Boston (Boston: State Street Trust Company, 1938) 3-8; Tanya Boyett, "Thomas Handasyd Perkins: An Essay on Material Culture," Old-Time New England, 70 (1980): 50-52 and 59; Jones, map VII.

<sup>13</sup> Some Merchants and Sea Captains of Old Boston, 26-31; Curtis, 115-119.

driving to their business. My father drove in and out on a chaise, a vehicle now seldom seen for thirty years.

There were about a thousand people all told in the town; there was no public conveyance to Boston for many, many years. The Brighton stage passed through once a week, loaded with drovers on market day. How good it was a boy to be in those days of old Brookline.<sup>14</sup>

Contact between the elite and the long-term residents of the town would seem to have been fairly minimal. Part of what attracted the upper class to Brookline was the social homogeneity of the Gardner Hill district---the opportunity it afforded to put the strains and stresses of business and politics behind and to associate exclusively with members of one's own class. The affairs of Brookline's town government apparently held little interest for these mostly temporary residents, who seemed content to allow the old families to govern the town along traditional lines. In contrast to the pre-revolutionary era when prominent Bostonians were often chosen to serve as moderator or representative, no member of the Boston elite was elected to a local public office at any point between 1795 and 1840.<sup>15</sup>

The one arena in which contact between the elite and Brookline's general population occurred with some regularity was the First Church situated on Walnut Street in the Gardner Hill section, and presided over by the Reverend Dr. John Pierce, a religious moderate who steadfastly refused to countenance a formal break with congregationalism, but who was widely regarded as being

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<sup>14</sup> Mary H. Wadsworth, "Edward Atkinson," Proceedings of the Brookline Historical Society for 1950 (Brookline: Brookline Historical Society, 1950) 21 and 23.

<sup>15</sup> Kingman, 835-840.

sympathetic to Unitarian principles. Pierce sought reconciliation in an era of increasing religious conflict. His moderation was well-suited to the congregation and town he served. Such was this ubiquitous clergyman's influence (he was Brookline's only minister before 1828) that it was said, "Dr. Pierce is Brookline, and Brookline is Dr. Pierce." His ministry of fifty-two years lasted from 1797 to 1849, coinciding almost exactly with the period of Gardner Hill's emergence as Boston's premier elite enclave.<sup>16</sup>

An incident occurring in this church in 1837 shows how conservative was Brookline's social atmosphere at the time. In 1830 Samuel Philbrick (1789-1830), a wealthy Boston merchant and abolitionist, purchased a large stone mansion on Walnut Street, which he soon turned into a center of anti-slavery activity. Philbrick helped finance the establishment of William Lloyd Garrison's

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<sup>16</sup> Kingman, 814-817; The First Church was established in 1713. Prior to that time most Brookline residents worshipped in neighboring Roxbury. The congregation has occupied four meetinghouses, built in 1714, 1806, and 1848, and 1893, all situated at the same general location. The scale and architecture of these structures reflected the social character of the town at the time of their construction. The 1714 building was a simple steepleless wooden affair, measuring only forty-four by thirty-five feet. By contrast, the church's second edifice, erected in 1806, cost over \$20,000, was surmounted by a one hundred thirty-seven foot high steeple, and measured sixty-eight by sixty-four feet. Its bell, weighing over a thousand pounds, was a gift of China Trade merchant Stephen Higginson. Subsequent buildings were also quite elaborate. While two other churches were built in Brookline before 1850, a Baptist Church in 1828 and an Evangelical Congregationalist Church in 1844, both were located outside of the town's elite districts and neither attracted elite families. Only with the construction of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in 1852 was the First Church to any degree challenged as a place of worship for Brookline's elite families. Kingman, 807-822; Charles K. Bolton, Brookline, The History of a Favored Town (Brookline, 1897) 133-135, 137-139 and 141-143; David A. Johnson, Imprints: A Brief History of the First Parish in Brookline (Brookline: First Parish in Brookline, 1993) 43-51 and 59-64.

newspaper the Liberator in 1831 and served as Treasurer of the Massachusetts Antislavery Society for twenty years.<sup>17</sup>

Philbrick's abolitionist activities disturbed and offended his Brookline neighbors. Anti-abolitionist sentiment was at an all-time high in the mid-1830s, especially among "gentlemen of property and standing"---lawyers, politicians, merchants, shopkeepers and bankers, the pillars of the northern mercantile establishment (an element well-represented in Brookline), who feared that the abolitionist movement signalled a further breakdown of social distinctions, part of the general leveling process that seemed to be enveloping American society at the time.<sup>18</sup>

The town's "gentlemen of property and standing" were particularly offended by two incidents involving the Pierce family and First Parish Church. The radical abolitionists Sarah and Angelina Grimke had spent the 1837 social season as guests at Philbrick's Walnut Street mansion, and had addressed the ladies of Brookline (an audience which included Lucy Tappan Pierce, the wife of Rev. Dr. Pierce) in Philbrick's parlor.<sup>19</sup> Such behavior shocked and offended Brookline's residents, members of the elite and old-time families alike.

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<sup>17</sup> Burrage, Walter S., "The Philbrick House, 182 Walnut Street: A History," Proceedings of the Brookline Historical Society for 1949 (Brookline: Brookline Historical Society, 1949) 41-44; Harold Parker Williams, "Brookline in the Anti-Slavery Movement," Proceedings of the Brookline Historical Society for 1899 (Brookline: Brookline Historical Society, 1899) 75-77; Pauline Chase Harrell, "Anti-slavery Days in Brookline," Proceedings of the Brookline Historical Society for 1975-1978 (Brookline: Brookline Historical Society, 1979) 77.

<sup>18</sup> Leonard L. Richards, "Gentlemen of Property and Standing": Anti-abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America (London: Oxford University Press, 1970) 168-169.

<sup>19</sup> Dr. Pierce's wife, Lucy Tappan Pierce, was the sister of the evangelical

More offensive still was Philbrick's behavior in seating a young colored girl in his first church pew rather than in the section reserved for blacks high above the front gallery. "When the child was seen sitting with Mr. Philbrick," an account of the incident notes, "there was great excitement throughout the congregation. One family left the church and the decorum of the service was nearly destroyed." Dr. Pierce, who disapproved of abolition, while claiming to be personally opposed to slavery, later visited Philbrick and "gravely expostulated with him," to which the reformer responded that if the girl could not sit with his family, he would himself stay away.<sup>20</sup>

Philbrick did not remain isolated for long, however. In the same year as these two incidents, two other abolitionists moved to Gardner Hill: Ellis Gray Loring, a leading Boston attorney and a founder of the New England Anti-slavery Society, and Eliza Lee Follen, writer, teacher and fervent advocate of the Sunday-school movement. Philbrick, Loring, and Follen became the nucleus of the Brookline anti-slavery movement which would a decade later include members of a number of elite families. Public opinion continued to be hostile to the movement for some years, however. As late as 1841, the Selectmen refused

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reformer Lewis Tappan, who had married into the Aspinwall family of Brookline in 1813, and who had resided in the town from 1823 to 1828. Not yet an abolitionist, Tappan was fervently committed to evangelical religion and allied reform efforts. Disagreeing with Dr. Pierce on a broad range of theological questions, Tappan in 1827 joined several other dissatisfied parishioners in withdrawing from Pierce's church to join Brighton's newly-established Evangelical Congregational Society, presided over by the Reverend George Washington Blagden, a harsh critic of abolitionism. Bertram Wyatt Brown, Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War Against Slavery (New York: Atheneum, 1971) 18, 27 and 34

<sup>20</sup> Williams, 76-77.

the abolitionists the use of the Brookline town hall on the grounds that they feared their meeting would precipitate mob action.<sup>21</sup>

The anti-slavery activities of Philbrick and his associates, however, in no way impeded the flow of Boston's elite families into Brookline. Newcomers of the 1840s and 1850s included such prominent business and professional leaders as former Mayor Theodore Lyman; East India merchant John L. Gardner; leading real estate attorney Nathaniel Ingersoll Bowditch; railroad financier and banker Ignatius Sargent; William Dwight, the financial agent of a half dozen textile corporations; John Howe, President of the Eastern Railroad; William F. Weld, on his way to becoming the nation's largest shipowner; Bank President James S. Amory; and noted political economist Henry Lee, one of the founders of Lee, Higginson & Company. Thus by 1860 the Walnut Street-Gardner Hill section of Brookline contained an unparalleled concentration of wealthy, socially prominent, and professionally distinguished residents.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Williams, 77.

<sup>22</sup> Wilder, 626-627; Boston Daily Advertiser, 25 July 1884: 8; Louise Hall Tharp, Mrs. Jack: A Biography of Isabella Stewart Gardner (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1965) 106; Professional and Industrial History of Suffolk County, Massachusetts, vol. 1 (Boston, 1894) 23-24; A History of Brookline, Massachusetts, 1630-1906: Commemorating the Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Town (Brookline, 1906) 122.; Wilder, 626; Boston Evening Transcript, 19 August 1884: 1; "Sargent, Charles Sprague," Biographies: Pamphlet File, Brookline Room, Brookline Public Library; Albert Emerson Benson, History of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society (Norwood, Ma.: Plimpton Press, 1929) 203; Kingman, 858; Professional and Industrial History of Suffolk County, Massachusetts, vol. 2: 685-694; "Lee, Henry," Biographies: Pamphlet File, Brookline Room, Brookline Public Library.

<sup>23</sup> Robert C. Winthrop, a former Speaker of the U. S. House of Representatives (1847-48) and former U. S. Senator (1850-51), had lived in

Winthrop was referring here not to Brookline as a whole, but to the Gardner Hill district, confidently asserting that it was unlike any other area on earth in the degree to which it manifested "refined culture" and generated "good influences and examples." In this detached, rural environment the elite was able to assert its moral and cultural superiority to a degree impossible in the urban, commercial world of Boston. Winthrop's description must also be understood in context, however, for the author was writing nostalgically about a class which by the mid-1880s was facing manifold challenges to the power and prestige it had enjoyed at mid-century.<sup>24</sup>

By 1851, the "little circle of territory," a neighborhood established by men of business as a retreat from business, contained no less than forty of the seventy Brookline residents who owned property assessed at more than \$25,000.<sup>25</sup> Gardner Hill thus emerged as a preferred suburb long before Brookline began feeling the influence of the various transportation improvements which form the main subject of this chapter.

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Brookline for twenty-three years when he wrote this description in 1888. In 1865, Winthrop married Adele Thayer, widow of railroad financier John Eliot Thayer. "In Brookline, also," Wilder noted of the Thayer-Winthrop estate, "is the elegant villa, with its splendid avenues and grounds of the late John Eliot Thayer, left by him to Mrs. Thayer, now Mrs. Robert C. Winthrop." His retirement to Brookline in 1865 also marked the effective end of Winthrop's political career. Kingman, 859.

<sup>24</sup> Barbara Miller Solomon, Ancestors and Immigrants: A Changing New England Tradition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972) 23-42.

<sup>25</sup> Brookline, List of Taxes Assessed in the Town of Brookline and the Names of the Tax Payers for the Years 1851, 52, 53 (Boston, 1854) 3-26.

The first major transportation project to significantly influence the development on the western edge of Boston was the building between 1818 and 1821 by the Boston & Roxbury Mill Dam Corporation of a causeway across the as yet unfilled Back Bay. The construction of the Mill Dam, as this causeway was called, helped to shape the character of Brookline's second elite neighborhood, the Longwood/ Cottage Farm district.

The principal promoter of the Mill Dam project, Uriah Cotting, a man of considerable vision who had earlier transformed Boston's waterfront, saw two potential sources of profit in this venture: utilization of the tidal power of the Charles River for manufacturing (Cotting believed that the Mill Dam basin could be made to accomodate as many as eighty-one industrial establishments) and large-scale residential development on acreage in the northeast corner of the Brookline, near the western terminus of the Mill Dam Road.<sup>26</sup>

When Cotting died in 1819, three of his associates---Ebenezer Francis, David Sears and Israel Thorndike---carried this grandiose scheme to fruition. Completed in 1821, the Mill Dam proved much less profitable than anticipated. While a handful of industrial establishments arose at Gravelly Point, on the Roxbury side of the basin, the Back Bay failed to become the great manufacturing district its promoters had envisioned.<sup>27</sup>

Nor were the Mill Dam promoters successful in developing the northeastern corner of Brookline. One does not have to look far to ascertain why Bostonians failed to rush out to northeastern Brookline. Though the city's

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<sup>26</sup> Whitehill, 92; Karr, 78.

<sup>27</sup> Karr, 79; Whitehill, 100.

population was growing at a rapid rate (an incredible 42 percent in the 1820s), buildable acreage was also expanding. Three major landfill projects were underway in the 1820s and 1830s, on Beacon Hill, in the West End (the Mill Pond area), and on the Roxbury Neck, all providing attractive and convenient sites for residential construction. Moreover, the annexation of the Dorchester Neck (South Boston) in 1804, and the opening of the South Boston Bridge in the following year, afforded those desiring a more rural residence ample building sites much closer at hand than Brookline.<sup>28</sup>

Other factors militated against the residential development of the northeastern corner of Brookline. The Mill Dam was a toll road, which in itself tended to discouraged commuting. In addition, the ride across the Mill Dam to Brookline was neither particularly safe nor pleasant. William Lawrence, son of one of the early elite residents of the neighborhood, furnished a detailed description of the mill dam road's drawbacks in his memoirs:

It seemed a long drive...to our house in Longwood, for just beyond Charles Street the blocks of houses stopped. The Public Garden was then a dirty waste, and at Arlington Street was the city dump, where ashes and other refuse were thrown by tip-cars into the Back Bay.

Some years before we moved out to Longwood, a causeway had been constructed running west from the dump at Arlington Street through the water to the marsh land where Beacon Street and Commonwealth Avenue now intersect [Kenmore Square]. This was Beacon Street, but in those days was always called "The Mill Dam." On the south side was the Back Bay, and on the north the Charles River. A plank walk ran along the south side of the road and a line of poplar trees.

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<sup>28</sup> Whitehill, 74-84.

Lawrence also remembered the trip out to Brookline as giving his father, manufacturer Amos A. Lawrence, "many a rough and cold ride which probably laid up a store of neuralgia for later life."<sup>29</sup>

Driving out from Boston on a winter day was a cold trip. The northwest wind swept down the Charles River valley unobstructed, and the great mass of snowy ice caused by the tides on the flats gave the scene an Arctic look, for Cambridgeport was well back of the river across water and marsh. To the south one's vision swept across the Back Bay to the Neck two miles away, and the Roxbury Meeting House stood out against the sky. Through holes cut in the ice men were spearing eels, and boys were skating.

Nor were the surroundings uninterruptedly rural. There were the perils of commercial traffic and railroad crossings to contend with.

Halfway across the Dam was the tollgate, where every team and carriage stopped to pay the toll: and just beyond, where at flood tide the Charles rushed in under a cut in the road to fill the Back Bay, and at ebb tide rushed out again, were the mill and the mill-wheel which ground corn hauled in from Brookline and Newton by farmers. At the fork "Brighton Road" ran out where Commonwealth Avenue now is, and the "Punch Bowl Road" to the left [Brookline Avenue], leading to the Punch Bowl Tavern in the Boston and Worcester---now the Albany---Railroad tracks. Over the road was a great sign, "Railroad Crossing: Look out for the Engine while the bell rings."<sup>30</sup>

Another factor that no doubt discouraged the development of northeastern Brookline was a lack of direct access from Sewall's Point, where the Mill Dam ended, to the high land which Francis, Sears and Thorndike had hoped to develop. While two roads radiated out from Sewall's Point (the present Brookline and Commonwealth Avenues), they skirted rather than penetrated northeastern Brookline. Moreover Brookline Avenue was situated on the wrong side of the

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<sup>29</sup> William Lawrence, The Life of Amos A. Lawrence (Boston, 1888) 62.

<sup>30</sup> William Lawrence, Memories of a Happy Life (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1926) 2-4.

Muddy River. Not until 1851, thirty years after the opening of the Mill Dam, did Brookline construct a road (Beacon Street) across the marshes linking Sewall's point directly to the northeastern corner of the town.<sup>31</sup>

The Longwood/ Cottage Farm section of Brookline, experienced a different type of development from what the Mill Dam projectors had envisioned--more gradual and idiosyncratic, and dominated by two major landowners, David Sears and Amos A. Lawrence.

The first Bostonian to settle in northeastern Brookline was David Sears, whose granite town house on Beacon Street facing the Boston Common was the largest private residence in the city. The son of David Sears, Sr., one of Boston's great China trade merchants, and the son-in-law of former U.S. Senator Jonathan Mason, Sears was one of Boston's great nabobs. In 1816, at the age of twenty-nine, he inherited "the largest estate which had descended to any young man in Boston, amounting to some eight hundred thousand dollars."<sup>32</sup>

As a major investor in the Boston & Roxbury Mill Dam Corporation, Sears had purchased some two hundred acres in the northeastern section of Brookline which he eventually developed into the picturesque residential district of Longwood.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Karr, 79-80.

<sup>32</sup> "David Sears," New England Historical and Genealogical Register 26 (April 1872): 207-208.

<sup>33</sup> Sears named Longwood after the St. Helena country estate of the Emperor Napoleon, whose wife, Josephine, he had known in Paris in his younger days. Robert C. Winthrop, Jr., Memoir of the Hon. David Sears, Prepared Agreeably to a Resolution of the Massachusetts Historical Society (Boston, n.d.) 11; "David Sears," 208.

Though Sears acquired Longwood in 1821, major development did not begin there for many years. As late as 1844, the entire northeastern corner of Brookline, comprising about one thousand acres, contained only seven residences.<sup>34</sup> In 1848, Sears deeded parts of his estate to his adult children. Eventually, two of his daughters, Mrs. William Amory and Mrs. George C. Crowninshield, built homes on the estate. Sears gave the streets and squares of Longwood generous dimensions, naming them after persons, places or families with which he or his wife's kindred had been associated.<sup>35</sup> By the fall of 1849, he had landscaped the area with 14,000 trees, including 300 sycamores, 3000 English and Dutch Elms, 1,000 Norway maples, and 1,000 assorted oaks, all imported from England.<sup>36</sup> As Robert C. Winthrop noted of Sears' contribution to Longwood:

The principal portion of this attractive suburb was not merely laid out and improved, but largely built up, at Mr. Sears' expense; and his taste, liberality and foresight are alike evinced in the numerous villas and pleasure-grounds which lend to the vicinity an especial charm, as well as in the wise provisions which have thus far entirely protected them from unsightly and inconvenient neighbors.<sup>37</sup>

In 1855 Ballou's Pictorial described Longwood as "a beautiful tract. It is laid out on a liberal scale. Fine roads and carriageways intersect it in various

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<sup>34</sup> Jones, Maps VII and VIII.

<sup>35</sup> Winthrop, 11.

<sup>36</sup> Pauline Chase Harrell and Margaret Supplee Smith, Victorian Boston Today: Ten Walking Tours (Boston: Victorian Society of America, 1975) 61.

<sup>37</sup> Winthrop, 11.

directions. The noble woods are cleared of all underbrush, and there are many fine hedges, lawns and opening vistas, commanding beautiful views."<sup>38</sup>

Though Longwood had much in common with Alexander Jackson Davis' prototypical romantic suburb, Llewelyn Park, then being developed in New Jersey, there were some notable differences. While Longwood had beautiful vistas like Davis' suburb, Sears used a modified gridiron pattern in laying out his road system rather than the winding lanes Davis was making fashionable. Not only was the level topography at Longwood less suited to curvilinear roadways, but Sears drew many of his ideas from the French, who employed geometric regularity in landscaping, while Davis' landscaping model was the more "wayward and inspirational" English garden. In addition, while Llewelyn Park was created to accomodate an elite class in general, Longwood was created (at least in its initial stages) by an elite patriarch for his children and grandchildren. The same pattern obtained in the case of neighboring Cottage Farm.<sup>39</sup>

Had it not been for this immensely wealthy and eccentric man, Longwood's development would doubtless have assumed a very different character, for by the time he began fashioning his estate into a romantic suburban village, the transportation problem that had earlier impeded the development of the area had been surmounted by the construction of the Brookline Branch Railroad and Beacon Street (to be discussed below). Thus Sears sacrificed a money making opportunity in developing Longwood as he did; he elevated style over profitability. As his biographer has noted: "It would

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<sup>38</sup> Ballou's Pictorial, vol. 8, 16 June 1855: 376-377.

<sup>39</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) 76-79 and 86.

probably not have been difficult for him to procure a quicker return for so important an investment."<sup>40</sup>

Sears was much more than a developer, however. He sought to dominate Longwood's life entirely, to be its effective lord of the manor. Sears looked the part of the lord.

With his upright carriage, white hair and whiskers, and pronouncedly aquiline nose, he looked every inch a Bourbon; but in spirit he was a Bonaparte. Like the first Emperor of the French, furthermore, he liked to play deus ex machina to the entire neighborhood.

Sears sought to control Longwood's institutional development by his largesse, but was not entirely successful. He made a gift of a schoolhouse to Longwood, and in 1860 built an imposing Norman style church modeled after the one located in his ancestral village of Colchester, England. However, when he sought to impose his personal religious creed on the church his neighbors balked.

The building was certainly handsome and capacious, but the form of worship conducted within it was so idiosyncratic that few families cared to attend more than once. For David Sears, although he owned a pew in St. Paul's Episcopal Church (the present Cathedral) on the corner of Boston Common, was much too much of an individualist to be confined by purely denominational liturgical traditions, and in his Napoleonic way he ran his church to suit himself. He called it "The Apostolic Catholic Church of America," edited for it a Book of Common Prayer unabashedly eclectic in

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<sup>40</sup> Winthrop, 11; Sears' penchant for the impractical is also evident in the 1849 scheme he proposed for the filling in and development of Boston's Back Bay, a plan which Whitehill declared "suffers from a certain amateurishness of design." including "railroad tracks which simply vanish into space instead of leading to a station." Whitehill, 149-151.

content, had it privately printed, and placed a copy in every pew. From its pages all the services of worship were taken.<sup>41</sup>

The monopoly Sears exercised over land ownership, his elitist standards, and his overbearing behavior slowed Longwood's development. As late as 1870 fewer than twenty families resided in the neighborhood, mostly prosperous merchants and professionals, though standing well below the principal resident in wealth and social status.

The other influential northeastern Brookline landowner was Amos Adams Lawrence, Boston merchant and the son of the great textile manufacturer who founded Lawrence, Massachusetts. In 1851 he purchased ninety acres just north of the Sears estate, a property called Cottage Farm. The pattern of development at Cottage Farm closely paralleled that of Longwood. Its owner constructed homes for himself, family members, friends and business associates. According to his son, William, later Episcopal Bishop of Massachusetts,

From the first day that he moved to Longwood in 1851, [Amos] joined with his brother [William] in laying out their tract of land, planting trees, opening up roads, and building houses; so that within a few years the Cottage Farm was covered with a cluster of stone and brick cottages which, hidden behind trees and hedges, gave it the appearance of a private park. And as the first object was the creation of a pleasant neighborhood, the houses were always filled with families who joined with each other in making a delightful and refined community.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> George L. Blackman, "The House That Amos Built," Proceedings of the Brookline Historical Society for 1963-1966 (Brookline: Brookline Historical Society, 1968) 25-26.

<sup>42</sup> Lawrence, The Life of Amos A. Lawrence, 62.

Lawrence was a relatively young thirty-six, and on the way to becoming the largest manufacturer of knit goods in the country when he moved his young family to Brookline in 1851---a scant three miles from Boston but "as much in the country as though it were twenty." Boston was no fit place in which to raise children, he believed. The very forces of economic and technological change that were enriching industrialists like Lawrence were simultaneously making the city a much less desirable place of residence for the well-to-do. Despite the many landfill projects then underway in Boston, it was growing increasingly congested and dangerous for upper class residents. The gap between rich and poor had widened dramatically since the 1820s (by 1848 the richest four percent of the taxpayers owned sixty-four percent of the city's property).<sup>43</sup> Moreover, the arrival of thousands of impoverished Irish immigrants was transforming the city's older districts into festering slums. Lawrence had grown up in the countryside (at the family homestead in Groton, Massachusetts). He loved the out-of-doors and the opportunities for exercise it afforded and wished his children to experience a similar upbringing in rural Brookline.

The homes that Sears and Lawrence built at Longwood and Cottage Farm in the 1840s and 1850s were of two distinct architectural styles: the Neo-Gothic, patterned on the work of Andrew J. Downing, and the new "French" style, both reflecting a growing disillusionment with the urban environment and a desire on the part of the wealthy and educated classes to distance themselves from anything unpleasant. In the early 19th century the home was coming more and

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<sup>43</sup> Howard P. Chudacoff and Judith E. Smith, The Evolution of American Urban Society (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.; Prentice Hall, 1988) 49.

more to be regarded as a potential bastion of morality in a society that was growing increasingly materialistic and immoral.<sup>44</sup>

The aversion such men felt toward manifestations of the industrial age applied even the distant sounds of the B&W railroad, whose tracks ran along the northern edge of Cottage Farm. As William Lawrence recounted in his biography of his father: "The shriek of the Worcester Railroad as the trains shot across the crowded streets toward Boston" prompted the brothers "to offer...the sum of \$10,000 to be given to the inventor of a system of signals in lieu of whistles." The directors of the B&W responded by ordering its engineers to "cease whistling several miles outside of Boston."<sup>45</sup> The Lawrence brothers thus used their influence and wealth to place limits on the railroad, a pattern that would be repeated in the late 1840s and early 1850s when more intrusive railroad projects threatened Brookline.

The earliest stage of transportation improvements (the new roads, turnpikes and bridges) influenced Brighton much more profoundly than Brookline. The construction in the period 1824 to 1825 of two new highways in the northern part of Brighton, the Mill Dam Extension (commonly referred to as the Brighton Road) and Western Avenue, contributed to the rise of a new commercial center there. The Mill Dam Extension, which followed the line of the present-day Commonwealth Avenue, Brighton Avenue, and North Beacon Street, from Sewall's Point to the North Beacon Street Bridge, became a major artery

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<sup>44</sup> Harrell, Victorian Boston Today, 58-59; David P. Handlin, The American Home: Architecture and Society, 1815-1914 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979) 34-43.

<sup>45</sup> Lawrence, 216.

between Boston and its western neighbors. Western Avenue, which paralleled the Charles River, linked Cambridge to Watertown.

Western Avenue was the brainchild of the Proprietors of the West Boston Bridge, who hoped that it would divert traffic from the Watertown Highway to their toll bridge in Cambridgeport. Since the proposed road threatened to reduce traffic through Brighton Center, the home of the cattle market, the town of Brighton opposed the scheme. The legislature, however, ignored the town's protest, and in 1824 incorporated the Watertown Turnpike Corporation to construct Western Avenue.<sup>46</sup>

These roadways gave the northern section of Brighton an economic vitality it had not previously enjoyed. Moreover the development Brighton experienced as a result of the construction of these roads was strikingly different from the type of development Brookline experienced in the aftermath of the opening of the Mill Dam Road---much faster-paced, more commercially-oriented, and without the inhibiting presence of a David Sears or an Amos A. Lawrence.

The development of a distinct village in North Brighton began in 1822 before the opening of these roadways, when Captain Jonathan Winship III (who had accumulated a substantial fortune in the Pacific and China trades) joined his younger brother Francis in founding Winships' Gardens, a major horticultural business on a parcel of land through which the Brighton Road would shortly be built. In contrast to Brookline, where horticulture was an elite avocation, in Brighton it was from the outset a major commercial enterprise. As a stockholder in the Boston & Roxbury Mill Corporation, Captain Winship was doubtless aware

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<sup>46</sup> Brighton Town Records, vol. 1: 390; Massachusetts General Court, Acts of 1824, Chapter 81, Legislative Packet.

that the road would cross this property.<sup>47</sup> An 1849 Massachusetts gazeteer described Winship's Gardens as follows:

This was the earliest attempt, in this section of the country, at raising young ornamental and useful plants for sale, in the style of the nurseries of Europe; and the skill and enterprise of its proprietors have conducted it to a point which equals any other establishment of the kind on the American continent.

It originated in the year 1822, in the cultivation of about two and a half acres, chiefly with young fruit trees; but the increasing taste of the inhabitants of Boston and its vicinity for flowers, soon caused this branch to become a profitable addition, so that now the extent of the border, from twelve to twenty feet wide, allotted to varieties of herbaceous flowers alone, exceeds one mile. The whole surface covered with young fruit and ornamental trees and flowers comprises twenty-five acres.<sup>48</sup>

Winships' Gardens was a highly successful enterprise which attracted large numbers of visitors to North Brighton. According to the son of the founder, J. P. C. Winship,

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<sup>47</sup> The Winships, founders of the Brighton Cattle Market, were an unusually enterprising family. Captain Jonathan Winship had just returned from the Pacific where he and his brothers had pioneered American trade with Russian America, the Hawaiian Islands, and the Columbia River Valley. Their successes earned them the sobriquet, "Lords of the Pacific." Hubert H. Bancroft, History of Alaska, 1780-1885 (New York: Antiquarian Press, Ltd., 1960) 477-481; James Kirker, Adventures to China, Americans in the Southern Oceans, 1792-1812 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970) 153; Morison, The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 59; Receipt dated October 27, 1819, evidencing Jonathan Winship's ownership of ten shares of Boston and Roxbury Mill Corporation stock. Winship Collection, item 20, Brighton-Allston Historical Society Archives.

<sup>48</sup> John Hayward, Gazeteer of Massachusetts (Boston 1849) 114-115.

May Day was distinguished by the elite of Boston riding horseback early in the morning to Winships' gardens, there purchasing a bouquet, and thence returning, by way of Roxbury, to attend May Day exercises or to their homes for breakfast. It was a fad that continued in fashion for many years. The Winships would sell from three to five hundred bouquets on that day and were dependent for additional flowers upon many other producers in the country about the city.

There was much to attract visitors at the gardens:

The conservatory at Winships' nurseries was a feature. It was about one hundred feet long and fifty feet wide. Its main passageway was tiled with marble and bordered with blue china-ware, about two feet high. The front lower walk was similarly treated. The rear of the building was used for potting plants and arranging flowers, with a room for preparing seed and storing bulbs.<sup>49</sup>

Horticulture and market gardening (both of which were to grow in importance after 1820) posed no barrier to Brighton's suburban development. On the other hand, the horticultural and market gardening industries were integral features of fringe zone economies. They flourished in Brighton in part because the town offered a ready supply of cheap fertilizers, by-products of its cattle and slaughtering industries.

North Brighton experienced rapid development following the completion of the Brighton Road and Western Avenue in the mid-1820s. At the beginning of the decade the area north of the intersection of Market and Faneuil Street had contained only five households, comprising a mere forty-five residents, and all but one of the sixteen who were identified as having occupations in the 1820 census were farmers. Not one resident of North Brighton engaged in

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<sup>49</sup> Winship, vol 1: 134.

manufacturing. In 1820 only 6.4 percent of the town's population resided in North Brighton.<sup>50</sup>

The completion of the Brighton Road and Western Avenue marked a turning point for the area. The next ten years were to witness rapid development. A number of prominent businessmen located there. Oliver Livermore, one of the town's wealthiest residents, constructed a home near the corner of Market and North Beacon Streets in the mid-1820s, as did his son-in-law, Cephas Brackett. Brackett was destined to become the wealthiest of North Brighton's residents, an owner of extensive property both in Brighton and Watertown, including a Watertown paper mill. His 1852 fortune was estimated at \$150,000.<sup>51</sup> Commercial development also occurred in the new neighborhood. The Taft Hotel was established at the intersection of Market and Western Avenue. As one contemporary noted of North Brighton in the 1824 to 1834 period:

The north part of the town...changed very much, and from being a lonely road when Brighton women went over to Mrs. Boardman's at Cambridge to trade for their new bonnets and other fixings, houses and stores were put up and it became quite a business place.<sup>52</sup>

The construction through the northern section of Brighton of the Boston & Worcester Railroad in 1834 brought further development.

Until 1816 no regularly scheduled transportation of any kind had existed between Boston and its western suburbs. The first hourly stagecoach service to the peripheral towns was not initiated until 1826. By 1827, two stage lines

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<sup>50</sup> U. S. Census, 1820, Brighton.

<sup>51</sup> Forbes, 91.

<sup>52</sup> Jones, "Reminiscences," The Item, 26 September 1886: 1.

connected Brookline and Brighton to the metropolis, one running through Brookline Village, the other across the Mill Dam. The round-trip fare in both instances was a relatively high 25 cents.<sup>53</sup> The introduction of regularly scheduled stage coach service did little to stimulate commuting, however, since a regular payment of 50 cents was prohibitive for most people. Since the wealthy generally owned their own carriages, stage coaches were rarely utilized for commuting.<sup>54</sup>

The construction through Brookline and Brighton of the Boston & Worcester Railroad made commuting more feasible. Brookline was not deeply influenced by the coming of the B&W since the line traversed only three quarters of a mile of the northernmost part of the town. While some residents of the Longwood/ Cottage Farm area may have utilized the line, its construction did not foster rapid development. The building of the B&W had a far greater impact upon Brighton.

Though the building of a western railroad ultimately reinforced Brighton's position as the center of the cattle and slaughtering industries, support for a railroad in Brighton was far from unanimous. As Kenneth Jackson noted in Crabgrass Frontier, opposition to railroad building was widespread in the 1830s.<sup>55</sup> Railroads brought hazards and inconveniences to the communities they

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<sup>53</sup> Brookline Transcript, 25 March 1871: 2; Will Fuller, "Brighton A Hundred Years Ago," The Item, 2 April 1927: 1.

<sup>54</sup> Other Industries of New England: Their Origin, Development and Accomplishments (Boston: State Street Bank, 1924) 47; George Adams, The Boston Directory...An Almanac from July 1849 to July 1850 (Boston, 1849) 55.

<sup>55</sup> Jackson, Crabgrass Frontier, 38.

crossed: noise, smoke, frightened horses, engines crossing streets at grade, and the possibility of property damage from fires.

In addition, Brighton's economy was still largely tied to agriculture, farmers comprising nearly two-thirds of the town's workforce in 1830. The prosperity of Brighton's farms rested upon the town's proximity to the largest urban market in New England. If a western railroad were built, remote regions of the state would begin sending cheap produce to the city to compete with goods produced in Brighton. Thus the town's farmers had much to lose. Before the coming of the railroad Boston's food supply was furnished mostly from towns like Brighton that lay within a twenty mile radius of the city. Prior to the railroad, as Henry Binford wrote in First Suburbs, interior New England, with its inferior transportation facilities, "clung to traditional implements, methods, and modes of distribution." The railroad revolutionized Massachusetts agriculture, forcing towns like Cambridge and Brighton into a painful adjustment.

Scattered small farms remained common in the inner suburbs in the 1840s, but commercial agriculture on any appreciable scale had disappeared. The one form of cultivation that expanded was horticulture [along with market gardening], employing intensive method and scientific breeding, and conducted on relatively small plots of ground in Cambridge and Brighton.<sup>56</sup>

Moreover, the Brighton Cattle and slaughtering industry had no pressing need of the services that a railroad would provide. The herding of cattle over hundreds of miles from interior areas by farmers and drovers had been going on for decades. These overland cattle drives continued to be an important source of

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<sup>56</sup> Binford, 33.

supply for the Brighton cattle market long after the construction of a western railroad.

There is no mention of the railroad issue in the Brighton town records of the late 1820s and early 1830s. This silence is rather surprising, given the town's propensity for taking strong positions on transportation issues. What appears to have happened here (the evidence being admittedly circumstantial) is that a small group of political entrepreneurs orchestrated a bargain whereby the town would raise no formal objection to the railroad in exchange for moving its route to the northern edge of town, a measure that would both safeguard property values in the more desirable and elevated sections of the community as well as locate the railroad in an area where Brighton's principal officeholders held substantial acreage. Significantly, the major officeholders in Brighton in the 1830 to 1834 period were chiefly North Brighton landowners. They included Francis Winship, part-owner of Winships' Gardens, who represented Brighton in the Massachusetts House of Representatives from 1823 to 1829 and in the Massachusetts State Senate from 1829 to 1833. Winship also served on the Board of Selectmen from 1829 to 1832 and frequently presided over the Brighton town meetings.<sup>57</sup> The Brighton depot was to be placed in Winships' Gardens, which operated to the advantage of the nursery since many of its patrons were Bostonians. From 1831 to 1835 North Brighton men controlled the town's Board of Selectmen. In the 1833 to 1835 period major North Brighton landowners held all three Selectmen's seats. They were Edmund Rice, Dana Dowse, and Cephas Brackett.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Winship, I, 141-142

<sup>58</sup> Winship, vol. 2: 63, 155 and 154.

An 1889 newspaper article provides an account of the coming of the B&W to Brighton which is consistent with the above explanation. While it does not say that North Brighton interests played a shaping role, it seems inconceivable that the town's principal officeholders would have failed to use their political power to fight a railroad building proposal that they viewed as harmful to their economic interest.

Brighton was at the zenith of its power [in the early 1830s]. Vast acres of undulating, inviting land plentifully dotted with busy slaughterhouses and the residences of prosperous cattle dealers met the eye on all sides. The railroad company had proposed to lay their tracks through the best of this territory; and a glance at the map between Boston and Newton will show this to have been the most natural course. But the solid men of Brighton did not see it in that light. They regarded the locomotive as an intruding nuisance, which would cheapen the value of their land. A petition was circulated, the citizens appeared in a body before the authorities, and their objections were urged with such force that the railroad was obliged to locate in Allston, because real property there was lower and cheaper, and hence less liable to be damaged by smoke, cinder, noise, etc., than the upper part of town, which was much more favored by nature.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> The Item, 30 March 1889: 7; The concern about damage to property from fire was well-placed. Some time after the building of the B&W, sparks from one of its engines destroyed the Moss House in Winships' Gardens, described by J. P. C. Winship as "an expensive affair...adorned with many articles from China, including birds, animals, and reptiles." A Boston newspaper observed of this event: "We saw the ruins of the beautiful Moss House of the Winships the other day; it was enough to make a crusty hard-fisted old bachelor shed tears! It was a little elysium---so exquisitely pleasant and cool, of a warm afternoon. By the way, do not the directors of the Worcester Railroad intend to pay up for the loss of this property? We look upon it as a debt of honor, which they are bound to pay. As we understand it, it was set on fire by the carelessness of using a new engine, not provided with the necessary wire netting to keep the cinders in. Pay up, good sirs, honor bright, and let Story [the Superintendent of the nursery] go to work again and try his skill at erecting another Moss House." Winship, vol. 1: 132-133.

The article goes on to credit Gorham Parsons, nephew of Massachusetts Chief Justice Theophilus Parsons, a well-to-do gentleman-farmer, with being "instrumental in the selection of [the northern] route rather than a more southerly one that would have taken the railroad through the center of town."<sup>60</sup> Parsons, in fact, represented a dying breed in Brighton. Heir to a "princely fortune," he was also an active entrepreneur who had long been interested in the development of Boston's transportation system. In 1807, he joined Andrew Craigie, Laommi Baldwin and other prominent transportation promoters in establishing the bridge company that constructed Craigie's Bridge, linking East Cambridge's Lechmere Point to Boston.<sup>61</sup> Parsons moved to Brighton sometime prior to 1815. Oakland Farms, his ninety acre estate, was a great local showplace upon which he lavished much time and money. A contemporary recollected Oakland Farms in these terms:

[Parsons] imported fine cattle, sheep and swine. The grounds were laid out with great care. The brook furnished ponds and waterfalls. Bridges, geese and ducks, the flower garden with its summer house and works of art, Hardy Edwards, his faithful servant, and the leopard dogs that always followed the carriage, were features.<sup>62</sup>

Parsons also took a great interest in horticulture. Wilder described him as a "celebrated horticulturalist."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> The Item, 30 March 1889: 7.

<sup>61</sup> Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, A Topographical and Historical Description of Boston (Boston, 1872) 421.

<sup>62</sup> Jones, "Reminiscences," The Item, 21 August 1886:1.

<sup>63</sup> Wilder, 631.

Parsons involved himself in the economic and political life of Brighton as well. He played a key role in the campaign to bring the MSPA's fair and cattle show to Brighton (described in Chapter I) and aided in the establishment of the Cattle Fair Hotel Corporation in 1830 and the Bank of Brighton in 1832. Brighton elected him its representative to the Massachusetts Legislature in 1820, 1821, and 1822.<sup>64</sup>

The rerouting of the Boston & Worcester Railroad from the center of the community---the Nonantum Valley---to the northernmost part of town was extremely significant for the future of Brighton. If a railroad had been built through the center of the community, as was originally proposed, nuisance industries would almost certainly have been more widely scattered over its face. By confining the railroad to Brighton's northernmost section, Parsons and the other "solid men of Brighton" helped to foster a degree of industrial concentration.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Winship, vol 1: 60-61.

<sup>65</sup> Despite his success in rerouting the B&W, Parsons did not long remain in Brighton. In 1838, just four years after the building of the railroad, he sold off his estate (having divided it into eleven sections) and moved to the family homestead in Byfield, Massachusetts. Not only were Boston's great merchants not choosing to settle in Brighton, but some of the handful already there seemed to be losing confidence in its residential viability. The only other resident of like social prestige in the 1830s was John Parkman, son of the great China trade merchant Samuel Parkman, and uncle of the historian Francis Parkman, an amateur horticulturalist, who owned the old Faneuil Estate from 1811 to 1838. With his death in 1838, and the departure of Parsons in the same year, no member of the elite resided in Brighton. Winship, vol 1: 59-60, 62, and 51; Mason Wade, Francis Parkman: Heroic Historian (New York: Viking Press, 1942) 4-7.

Construction of the Boston & Worcester Railroad began in 1832. By the spring of 1834---with the line completed as far as West Newton---service was inaugurated.<sup>66</sup> The establishment of Brighton's railroad depot at the center of Winships' Gardens helped to stimulate the development of North Brighton. By 1850 the area near to the depot, known as "Brighton Corners," had become the town's second largest commercial center, containing some fifteen business establishments, including two general stores, a hotel, a livery stable and two lumber yards. This neighborhood's share of the town's population, which had stood at a mere 6.4 percent in 1820, rose to almost 25 percent by 1850.<sup>67</sup> By 1856 land values in the area had appreciated and the Winship heirs (the Winship brothers both having died in the 1847 to 1850 period) decided to discontinue the nursery, to subdivide its nearly forty acres, and attempt to sell the land.<sup>68</sup>

In announcing this sale the owners described their North Brighton acreage as situated on the line of the Boston & Worcester Railroad, and the Western Avenue (or Mill Dam) leading from Boston. It is 1 1/2 miles from Mt. Auburn and Cambridge colleges, and 2 miles from Brookline, Newton Corner and Watertown. The soil is of superior quality and in a high state of cultivation.... The proprietors are confident, that no superior inducements to purchase have been offered for many years.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Jones, "Reminiscences," The Item, 26 September 1886: 1.

<sup>67</sup> U.S. Census, 1850, Population Schedule, Brighton.

<sup>68</sup> Winship, vol. 1: 140-141.

<sup>69</sup> Middlesex County, Massachusetts, Registry of Deeds, "Plan of the Winship Estate," Plan Book 7: 1.

The Winships subdivided their land into sixty-eight lots ranging in size from 15,000 to 40,000 square feet. Only two of these parcels contained residential structures, the homes of the deceased Winship brothers. The lots were offered for sale at public auction on Saturday, June 15, 1856, the owners having provided prospective buyers free transportation from the B&W's Boston depot.

The Winships hoped the former nursery's elevated location (on a hill overlooking the Charles River), rich soil, and proximity to Boston would interest middle class Bostonians. That it did not seems clear from the area's slow rate of development. As late as 1875 only thirty-six of the sixty-eight lots had experienced development, most containing inexpensive working class structures having an average 1870 value of about \$1,000. According to the 1870 census nearly two-thirds of the residents of the former nursery site were Irish laborers. Why did the Winship Gardens parcel experience mostly working class development? One does not have to look far for an explanation. Not only was the Winship acreage situated in the most heavily industrialized section of Brighton (the town's four commercial arteries---the Charles River, two toll roads, and the B&W railroad---converged there), but some fifteen slaughterhouses were to be found within a half-mile radius of the site.<sup>70</sup>

The Brighton Depot in Winships' Gardens was the town's sole railroad depot until the mid-1860s. After the discontinuance of the nursery in the mid-1850s, it was moved to the opposite side of Market Street, where cattle could be more conveniently unloaded and driven to the stockyards in Brighton Center.

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<sup>70</sup> U.S. Census, 1860, Industrial Schedule, Brighton; Brighton, Annual Report of the Receipts and Expenditures for 1854 (Cambridge, 1854) 17-38; H. M. Wightman, Plan of the Town of Brighton, 1866.

While B&W trains sometimes stopped in the easterly section of the town, at Cambridge Crossing (later renamed Allston), the railroad did not establish a depot there until 1866. "The original predecessor of the B&W Railroad" at Allston, an elderly resident recollected, "was an 8 x 10 cobbler's shop. The cobbler kept a few tickets in a box and occasionally he would flag a train for the accomodation of someone."<sup>71</sup>

Travel by train was less expensive than other modes of transportation (stage lines or omnibuses) and much less time-consuming, the trip to the B&W's Boston Depot at the corner of Lincoln and Beach Streets taking only about twenty minutes. The fare from Brighton to Boston in 1846 stood at 17 cents. An 1850 B&W advertisement declared, "The trains, both in Winter and Summer, are very numerous, and with reasonable rates for single and Season Passage Tickets, offer strong inducements for gentlemen doing business in the city, to live in the country, both on the score of economy and of health and comfort." In 1850, the B&W began selling season's tickets at reduced rates.<sup>72</sup>

Yet the coming of the railroad did not lead to a large-scale commuting influx into Brighton. Despite the town's proximity to Boston and the availability of rail passenger service few Bostonians were attracted to the market town. In a period when laborers were earning a dollar a day, only the upper classes could afford a 34 cent round-trip fare, and the attractions of Brighton to the upper classes were limited. By 1855 the fare had fallen to 15 cents each way, with

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<sup>71</sup> W.M. Cotton, "Brighton 50 Years ago," The Item, 20 April 1912: 1.

<sup>72</sup> George Adams, New Directory of the City of Boston...from July 1846-47 (Boston, 1846) 22; George Adams, The Directory of the City of Boston...from July 1850 to July 1851 (Boston, 1850) 52.

season's tickets now available, but the cost remained prohibitive for persons of average or below average means.<sup>73</sup> Labor historian Bruce Laurie has estimated the average skilled worker's annual income in 1850 at about \$300.<sup>74</sup> Commuting by train would have consumed a substantial part of a working class family's annual income. Even if it had been affordable for the lower classes, moreover, the long work day and the unreliability of employment would probably have sufficed to discourage working class commuting.

Yet the B&W did seek the patronage of working men. It added a "second class" car to each of its trains with fares reduced by 25 percent in the hopes of attracting working class ridership. The results proved disappointing, however. While the B&W ran second class cars all through its history, they never carried more than 20 percent of the line's total passenger load, and in most years less than 10 percent.<sup>75</sup> While Brighton's working class population increased substantially in the decades of the 1830s and 1840s, the railroad's commuter service played no direct role in fostering this influx. These newcomers were predominantly Irish immigrants who moved to the market town to avail themselves of the many job opportunities provided by its vibrant fringe zone economy.

Middle and upper class families were likewise drawn to Brighton by its commercial vitality rather than by its residential attractions. They tended,

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<sup>73</sup> George Adams, Boston Directory for the Year 1855 (Boston, 1855) 411.

<sup>74</sup> Bruce Laurie, Artisans into Workers: Labor in Nineteenth Century America (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1989) 59.

<sup>75</sup> Stephen Salisbury, The State, The Investor, and the Railroad (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967) 123.

moreover, to come from outlying towns rather than from Boston. While information on where these newcomers had resided just prior to their arrival is hard to come by, an analysis of the biographies on sixteen such individuals, all of whom eventually rose to positions of wealth, shows them to have come predominantly from rural districts. Significantly (in marked contrast to Brookline) only two of these men came to Brighton directly from Boston.<sup>76</sup>

The establishment of the B&W railroad did lead to increased Boston commuting, but most of it would seem to have been associated with the marketing of locally produced goods---beef, fruits and vegetables, trees and flowers, tallow and flour---the extension of Brighton-based enterprises to Boston. Eighteen of the forty-three 1855 Brighton commuters (41.9 percent) fell into this category. They included five butchers, four grocers, two provisions dealers, two nurserymen, two builders, two manufacturers (owners of a local sperm oil refinery and a flour and grain mill), and a dry goods merchant.<sup>77</sup>

Among the most prominent of these commuters was John S. Kelley, a thirty-three year old New Hampshire native and former Watertown school teacher, who moved to Brighton with his wife, Abby, in 1838. Forming a partnership with Charles Spring, he opened a dry goods business in Brighton Center. By 1855, however, his primary business address was in Boston, where he was operating as a commission merchant in partnership with Spring, while

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<sup>76</sup> This list was compiled by cross-referencing the 1845 Massachusetts census with biographical information from Winship's Historical Brighton and obituary notices from The Item and the Boston Transcript.

<sup>77</sup> This list was compiled by cross-referencing the 1855 Massachusetts Census with the 1855 Boston City Directory.

also maintaining his Brighton dry goods establishment. Kelley lived near Union Square, within easy walking distance of the B&W's Cambridge Crossing stop. He involved himself in the political life of the community, serving on the School Committee in the early 1840s.<sup>78</sup>

More significant still was the arrival in Brighton in the early 1850s of two important contractors, John Davenport and Francis Standish. Davenport, born in Dorchester in 1802, was a leading Boston builder who had constructed many residences in the Pearl Street section of the city in the period when that neighborhood was still fashionable. In 1852, he and an associate, Franklin King, constructed the largest store-warehouse built in Boston up to that time. In 1851 Davenport built a substantial residence on Holton Street in Brighton, a short distance from Cambridge Crossing, while maintaining an office in Boston under the firm name Davenport & Bodwell. According to Winship, "To the last generation of builders [Davenport] was one of the most widely known in Boston, and his work was proverbially good and thorough." Over the next four decades, John Davenport and his sons, John, Jr. and Samuel, made a major contribution to residential development in Brighton.<sup>79</sup>

The second contractor, Francis Standish, a native of Maine, was like Davenport already a leading Boston builder when he moved to Brighton in 1851 at age thirty-one. He purchased a twelve acre parcel of land at the eastern end of town, a block north of the Brighton Road, which he immediately subdivided into fifteen building lots. On the largest of these he constructed an imposing

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<sup>78</sup> Winship, vol. 2: 196-197.

<sup>79</sup> Winship, vol. 2: 23

residence for himself, from which he commuted to his place of business on Albany Street in Boston.<sup>80</sup> The subdivision was in a rather remote location---some three-fifths of a mile from Cambridge Crossing. Ten of Standish's lots backed up to the tracks of the Boston & Worcester Railroad. He apparently hoped that the B&W would institute direct service to the site. An October 1, 1851 map which he prepared for the Middlesex Registry of Deeds shows a projected depot at the northern end of Malvern Street, adjoining his property.<sup>81</sup> The scheme proved unsuccessful, however. As late as 1875, more than twenty years later, Standish had still sold only five of the parcels and only four residences stood on the site.<sup>82</sup>

An additional eight of Brighton's 1855 commuters (18.6 percent) were young unmarried men, the sons of long-term residents. They included five clerks, two traders, and a merchant. Another seven commuters (14 percent)---three traders, a gentleman, a carpenter, a clerk and a weigher---were transient figures who lived in Brighton so briefly that they paid no taxes to the town in either 1855 or 1858.

Only seven of the 1855 commuters (16.3 percent) were wealthy men whose principal business interests were situated in Boston. Three of them ranked among the top 43 (the upper five percent) of Brighton taxpayers:

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<sup>80</sup> Winship, vol. 2: 174.

<sup>81</sup> Middlesex County, Massachusetts, Registry of Deeds, "Plan of 15 House Lots Near Cambridge Crossing, Brighton, Belonging to Francis Standish," Plan Book 4A, 12.

<sup>82</sup> G. M. Hopkins, Atlas of Suffolk County, the Late Town of Brighton, vol. 7 (Philadelphia, 1875) plate M.

Jonathan Whitney (ranking 6th), Samuel Bigelow (12th), Jotham Bush (27th), and John and Joseph Duncklee (43rd).

Little is known about Whitney and Bush. Whitney came to Brighton with his family in the late 1830s. In 1855, when he was fifty years of age, he listed his occupation as "gentleman," was married with two daughters, and maintained a business office on Commercial Street in Boston. Whitney died before 1858, whereupon his family left Brighton. The fifty-six year old Bush came to Brighton with his wife about 1850. He lived on Agricultural Hill near Brighton Center and owned a chair manufacturing business in Stirling, Massachusetts and Boston. Bush was said to have "amassed a considerable fortune" from his various business ventures. He relocated to Newton between 1855 and 1859.<sup>83</sup>

We know more about the other five well-to-do Boston-based commuters. They included Samuel and Jonathan Bigelow, an uncle and nephew. Samuel, who began his business career as a Charlestown butcher, arrived in Brighton with his nine year old nephew, Jonathan, in 1834, marrying soon after into the Brooks family, owners of much land in the northwest corner of the town. In 1838 Samuel purchased the old Faneuil estate from the Parkman heirs. By 1850 he had accumulated a fortune of \$200,000, and was described as "now a speculator in real estate" and "a keen calculator, who never loses sight of the dollar crop."<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Brighton Town Records, vol. 2: 262-265; U. S. Census, Population Schedule, 1840 and 1850, Brighton; Massachusetts Census, 1855; Winship, vol. 2: 193.

<sup>84</sup> Forbes, 90

By 1855 the Bigelows were commuting to offices in Boston's Old State House, where they engaged in the produce commission business.<sup>85</sup>

The Duncklee brothers came to Brighton from Amherst, New Hampshire in 1838 and 1841 respectively. They owned jointly about 17 acres of the old Parsons estate. They were also business partners, proprietors of an iron safe manufacturing business in Boston. John Duncklee served as State Representative in 1852.<sup>86</sup>

Another of these Boston-based merchants was Weare D. Bickford. A New Hampshire native, Bickford had settled in Boston as a young man, building up a prosperous ship chandlery business in the city. In 1853 he moved his family to Centre Place (now Lincoln Street) in North Brighton, near the Brighton Depot. Bickford served as a selectman during a critical period of the town's development---from 1864 to 1867 and again from 1869 to 1870---and was an early, though somewhat ineffectual supporter of efforts to bring Brighton's unhealthy slaughtering practices under tighter regulation.<sup>87</sup>

The railroad gave much more impetus to the commercial and industrial development of Brighton than it did to commuting. It encouraged livestock shipments by setting low carload rates for cattle, sheep, hogs and calves, which contributed to the expansion of the industry.<sup>88</sup> By 1850 the Brighton Cattle

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<sup>85</sup> Winship, vol. 1: 52-53; Winship, vol. 2: 79-80; Edmund M. Bacon, ed., Men of Progress: One Thousand Biographical Sketches and Portraits of Leaders of Business and Professional Life in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (Boston, 1896) 22.

<sup>86</sup> Winship, vol. 1: 62-63.

<sup>87</sup> Winship, vol. 2: 53.

<sup>88</sup> Salisbury, 99.

Market was doing between \$2 and \$3 million of business a year. In 1841, when livestock sales in Brighton totalled over \$2.4 million, the Brighton market was receiving 36,607 head of cattle, 31,872 swine, and 128,650 sheep, much of it transported by rail.<sup>89</sup> By the 1850s, the Brighton depot was the most profitable stop on the B&W line, its receipts exceeding those of all other depots, including the railroad's Boston facility.<sup>90</sup>

Evidencing the vitality of the cattle trade were the large number of hotels that arose in these years to accomodate the many drovers and dealers who visited the Brighton cattle yards. The most notable of these hostelries was the Cattle Fair Hotel, established in 1830 and enlarged in 1852 by noted Boston architect William Washburn. The earliest petition for the creation of a hotel corporation in Brighton, dating from February 6, 1822, described the town as "the great cattle mart of New England" and cited "the recent opening of new avenues, and the improvement of roads leading from the western parts of the Commonwealth to the capital" as causing "a great influx of travellers with the drovers, farmers and others whose business call them to the important fairs that are held weekly in the said town, throughout the year." The Cattle Fair's one hundred rooms made it the largest hotel in suburban Boston. To its rear stood the pens and the auction platform of the Brighton Cattle Market. By 1844 there

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<sup>89</sup> Hayward, 113.

<sup>90</sup> Alvin F. Harlow, Steelways of New England (New York: Creative Age Press, Inc., 1946) 96-98.

were eight hotels and inns in Brighton for the accomodation of the cattle trade's many patrons.<sup>91</sup>

The existence by the mid-1850s of two banks, the Brighton Bank (1832) and the Brighton Market Bank (1854) provides further evidence of the town's commercial vitality. No bank was established in Brookline, by contrast, until 1871. The Brighton Market Bank was floated in the boom following the recession of 1854 and preceding the panic of 1857, at a time when the economy of Brighton was expanding. By 1857 it was capitalized at a substantial \$250,000.<sup>92</sup> Brighton's banks were run by and for its businessmen---cattle dealers, slaughterhouse proprietors, horticulturalists, and market gardeners.

Brighton's horticultural industry also expanded in the 1830s and 1840s. The Nonantum Vale Nursery, Breck's Gardens, and Horace Gray's Grapery on Nonantum Hill arose alongside Winships' Gardens, making Brighton one of the two or three most important horticultural centers in the Boston area.

J. L. L. F. Warren's Nonantum Vale Gardens, established in the early 1820s, and located about a half mile west of the Cattle Market, was a celebrated nursery which attracted such distinguished visitors as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and William

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<sup>91</sup> Rochelle S. Elstein, "William Washburn and the Egyptian Revival in Boston," Old Time New England: The Bulletin of the Society for the Preservation of New England Anrtiquities 70 (1980) 74-75; Massachusetts, Acts of 1830, Chapter 73, Legislative Packet; Brighton, Town Records: Box 3, 20 March 1844.

<sup>92</sup> Kingman, 867; "The Brighton Market Bank," Bulletin of the Business Historical Society 12 (February 1938): 9; Bertram K. Little, Brookline Savings Bank and its Community (Brooline: Brookline Savings Bank, 1971) 16 .

Cullen Bryant. Warren won many awards, including an 1838 prize for raising the first commercial tomatoes in Massachusetts.<sup>93</sup>

Brighton's third major horticultural business was founded by Joseph Breck in 1836. A former Superintendent of the Horticultural Gardens at Lancaster, Massachusetts, and editor of the New England Farmer, Breck was already a leading figure when he arrived in Brighton. His first Brighton nursery was located on Washington Street near the Brookline boundary. At first he specialized in raising vegetable and flower seeds, and afterwards added shrubs, bulbous rooted plants, phlox, peonies, and tulips to his output. In 1851 Breck discontinued this nursery, selling most of his stock to his son-in-law, William C. Strong, for use at the grapery the latter had recently acquired from Horace Gray on Nonantum Hill. Breck resumed his career as a Brighton nurseryman in 1854 in Oak Square at the western end of Brighton, laying out the gardens behind his residence. He also founded the Joseph Breck & Son Seed Company, a leading agricultural supply house with offices at the Quincy Market in Boston.<sup>94</sup>

Another important Brighton horticultural establishment was that of Horace Gray on Nonantum Hill, founded in the early 1840s. According to Wilder, Gray "erected on the grounds the largest greenhouses known in the United States, in which were grown extensively numerous varieties of foreign grapes. For the testing of these under glass in cold houses, Gray erected a large curvilinear-roof house, two hundred feet long by twenty-four wide. This was such a great success that he built two more of the same dimensions."<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Winship, vol. 1:193-195.

<sup>94</sup> Winship, vol. 1: 177-180; Benson, 122-136.

<sup>95</sup> Wilder, 631.

The Brighton grapery was but one of Gray's many enterprises. His attorney, Daniel Webster, frequently sent a young law clerk, William C. Strong, to Gray's Nonantum Hill estate on business. According to Winship, Strong "was so charmed with the estate and especially the graperies that in the following year, 1848, when the estate was sold at auction he became the purchaser. The size of the estate, over one hundred acres, and the magnitude of the graperies...became at once such an interest and such a burden that he gave up the profession of law and devoted himself to horticultural interests." Strong expanded the nursery by laying out additional vines and adding more plants. He also built an immense greenhouse, in which, Wilder noted, "under one continuous roof of glass of 18,000 square feet, is an enclosure where plants are grown in the open ground; where immense quantities of the rose and flowers are daily cut for the market."<sup>96</sup>

Many small-scale manufactories were established in Brighton in the 1830 to 1840 period as well, producing a wide range of goods: buttons, soap, candles, tinware, shoes and boots, carriages, fireworks, harnesses, lard oil, pumps, sashes and blinds, whips, wheels and varnish. Much of this manufacturing was related, as one would expect, to the cattle and slaughtering industries. Soap, candles, shoes, boots, harnesses, blinds, whips and varnish were all made from livestock by-products.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Winship, vol. 1: 181; Wilder, 631.

<sup>97</sup> George Adams, A Business Directory of the Cities of Charlestown, Cambridge and Roxbury, and the Towns of Chelsea, Somerville, Brighton, Brookline, Dorchester and Milton...with an Almanack for 1850 (Boston, 1850) 97-98; U.S. Census, 1850, Industrial Schedule, Brighton.

Brookline's response to the transportation revolution of the 1820 to 1850 period was substantially different from Brighton's. The first significant mode of regularly scheduled public transportation to reach Brookline was the omnibus, not the railroad. In 1839 Sumner Wellman of Brighton, who had recently arrived from Maine, established the first omnibus service to Boston by way of Brookline Village and Roxbury. The omnibus had certain advantages over the railroad. Relatively little capital was needed to establish a line and the route could be easily altered to take account of new development. It was chiefly a class of young opportunists looking for a quick profit who established these lines. As Henry Binford has written, "most of the omnibus owners were small scale operators, who made money but never entered the circle of major suburban entrepreneurs or leaders."<sup>98</sup> Wellman fits this profile. He was far from being a rich man. As late as 1859 he paid Brighton no taxes, apart from a poll tax.<sup>99</sup> He drove the omnibus himself, alternating trips with an employee, Daniel Hyde. Wellman's omnibus line survived for twenty-one years. Its major advantage lay in an absence of competition on the Washington Street route. By 1845 it was making six trips a day, at 9 and 11 a.m. and at 1, 3, 6 and 9 p.m., for a fare 25 cents (18 1/2 cents from Brookline) each way, with tickets available in lots of six for a dollar (at an average cost of 16 2/3 cents apiece). Eventually Wellman's line became what was termed "an hourly."<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Binford, 89-90

<sup>99</sup> Brighton, Annual Report of the Receipts and Expenditures for 1855 (Cambridge, 1855) 34; Brighton, Annual Report of the Receipts and Expenditures for 1859 (Cambridge, 1859) 43.

<sup>100</sup> Winship, vol. 1: 183; George Adams, Boston City Directories, 1846-1860; Peter R. Knights, The Plain People of Boston: A Study in City Growth (New

Omnibus lines were patronized mostly by members of the middle and upper classes. Not all its riders traveled the entire distance to Boston. Charles Stearns, who resided on Harvard Street in the northern part of Brookline, recollected that in the 1840s "most of the family shopping was done along Roxbury Street" in Roxbury Highlands.<sup>101</sup> The fares were of course too high to attract working class ridership. But the lure of the omnibus was severely limited even for those who could afford to pay its high fare, for these heavy horse-drawn vehicles had many drawbacks. They were slow (averaging less than five miles an hour), uncomfortable, and poorly ventilated. Some owners of private conveyances doubtless preferred driving themselves to undergoing the rigors of omnibus travel.<sup>102</sup>

The introduction of omnibus service probably encouraged Thomas Aspinwall Davis to undertake the development of Brookline's first subdivision, Linden Place, on property he had inherited in 1843 just outside of Brookline Village. A Boston commuter and successful jeweler, Davis was elected Mayor of Boston on the Native American ticket in February 1845, but died in November just before the completion of his term.<sup>103</sup> Nativists like Davis, who were deeply fearful of the city's mounting foreign population, would have found the prospect of residing in an elite subdivision particularly enticing. Davis engaged Alexander

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York: Oxford University Press, 1971) 65-66.

<sup>101</sup> Winship, vol 2: 183; Brookline Transcript, 25 March 1871: 2; Charles H. Stearns, "The Sewall House," Proceedings of the Brookline Historical Society, for 1903 (Brookline: Brookline Historical Society, 1903) 42.

<sup>102</sup> Jackson, Crabgrass Frontier, 34-35.

<sup>103</sup> Winsor, vol. 3: 250-251.

Wadsworth, a civil engineer, to lay out his twenty acre property. The plan involved a single street, an elongated loop with a park at the center, and sizeable lots ranging from 17,730 to 146,200 square feet. The Boston Evening Transcript described Linden Place as "delightfully located."

[It] combines every requisite for an agreeable country residence---grove, hill, and undulating plain. Nothing can exceed the variegated beauty of the surrounding scenery. Our fair city, with her suburbs, forms a splendid crescent on one side, while the green hills of the distant country complete the circle. Everything around is touched and civilized by the refining hand of art, and of numerous mansions and gardens in view, each one seems more attractive than another.

An accompanying advertisement called the reader's attention to "the short distance from the city of the new neighborhood "affording to the man of business an agreeable ride after the duties of the day." For those lacking private carriages, it noted, "omnibuses run at accomodating hours."<sup>104</sup>

It was in the years 1848 to 1859, however, that Brookline experienced a genuine transportation revolution. Four new facilities were added to its transport and road network in this twelve year period: (1) the Brookline Branch Railroad, linking Brookline Village to Boston, which opened in 1848; (2) The Charles River Railroad, an 1852 extension of the Brookline Branch across Chestnut Hill; (3) Beacon Street, a major new thoroughfare constructed in 1851, which ran through the center of the town; and (4) a horse railroad, established in 1859, which replaced Wellman's omnibus line on the old road to Boston.

These manifold improvements in Brookline's transportation network---important as they were---would not have sufficed to generate large-scale

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<sup>104</sup> Karr, 256-257; Boston Traveler, 22 May 1843: 5.

commuting had it not been for another key factor---the upper class's experience of deteriorating social conditions in Boston. The city was growing at an unprecedented rate in the late 1840s and 1850s. Its economy was booming. The 1840s was probably the most prosperous decade in the city's shipping history, but shipping was only one of many forces generating growth. The railroads also made a significant contribution. By 1850 there were eight lines, all Boston owned, linking the metropolis to an extensive economic hinterland. The other great engine of the city's expansion was manufacturing. By 1850, Boston's manufacturing output stood at \$45 million. The 1840 to 1860 period witnessed a virtual doubling of the city's population---from 93,000 to 178,000. The Irish potato famine immigration furnished a vast pool of cheap labor that served to stoke its economic furnace. This growth, both of wealth and of population, gradually transformed the downtown from a mixed residential and commercial zone into an exclusively commercial district. As Bernard Bunting noted of this phenomenon in his history of Boston's Back Bay:

Consolidation and crowding in the central city had begun in the 1840s when the last remaining free areas of the peninsula were occupied. From then on the only way to meet the building needs in the heart of the growing city is an ever more intense land use. First to be rebuilt are the residential areas where houses are replaced by commercial buildings.<sup>105</sup>

An analysis of the pre-1848 places of residence of fifty Bostonians who relocated to Brookline in the 1848 to 1855 period shows them to have lived predominantly in two sections of the city: Beacon Hill and the old South End (the

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<sup>105</sup> Bainbridge Bunting, Houses of the Back Bay: An Architectural History, 1840-1917 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967) 9 and 38

area enclosed by the waterfront, State Street, Tremont Street and Dover Street--- a section that was becoming increasingly commercial). Forty-five of the fifty resided in these two zones, seventeen on Beacon Hill, and the other twenty-eight in the South End. As the downtown grew more congested, noisy and dangerous, a neighborhood unfit for middle and upper class families, Brookline, with its superior transportation facilities, its physical beauty, and its elite population, grew increasingly alluring.

There was strong opposition to railroad-building in Brookline. The residents of the town's two elite neighborhoods, the Gardner Hill and Longwood/Cottage Farm districts, led the opposition to railroads in an effort to protect the special character of their elite neighborhoods. Whatever transportation advantages the railroad might afford, it was feared, would be offset by damage to the special character of the town. Only when it became clear that railroads could be built without jeopardizing that special character did opposition fade. The railroad controversy also marked the first time the elite exerted itself over a major local issue and indicated how influential it could be when it deigned to exert itself.

Two proposals for the building of railroads through Brookline were placed before the state legislature in 1846. One sought construction of a line that would run from Boston to Woonsocket Falls, Rhode Island; the other, a line running from Boston to Southbridge, Massachusetts. The town voted to oppose both of these projects and established a committee to object to the construction of "any...Rail Road through the Town, which now is, or may hereafter be petitioned for during the present session of the Legislature."<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Curtis, 202.

Brookline's first railroad, the Brookline Branch, was ultimately built in 1848 with little opposition. The key to the virtually unanimous support it received was its lack of intrusiveness, for the projected one and a half mile track would run along the edge of the Muddy River, crossing land of no great value and intersecting no public roads whatsoever. There was, moreover, a genuine need for the passenger services this railroad would provide. In recommending its construction to the B&W's Board of Directors, the railroad's management had declared, "There is, at present, a large amount of travel to [Brookline Village] in private carriages and omnibuses, and this will doubtless increase rapidly, with the growth of population, and the increase of travelling facilities."<sup>107</sup>

Brookline welcomed the inauguration of railroad service, when it finally came, with much enthusiasm. The Boston Daily Journal described the April 24, 1848 ceremony marking the opening of the Brookline Branch as follows:

On Saturday last, by the liberality of the Directors of the Boston and Worcester Railroad, more than 2,000 persons, mostly inhabitants of Brookline and vicinity, passed over this delightful avenue, and notwithstanding there were fourteen trains that passed to and from during the day, not the slightest accident occurred.

At the appointed time, the long train of cars drawn by the "Iron Horse" decked with the American ensign, was signalled from the bend at the entrance to the town, and was welcomed at the depot, amid the thundering of cannon and the ringing of bells, while the long continued and deafening cheers of the multitude bespoke the grateful prompting of their hearts.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Karr, 155-56; Boston and Worcester Railroad, Report of the Directors to the Stockholders at the Seventeenth Annual Meeting, June 7, 1847 (Boston, 1847) 16; Boston and Worcester Railroad, Report of the Directors to the Stockholders at Their Eighteenth Annual Meeting, June 5, 1848 (Boston, 1848) 3-4.

<sup>108</sup> Bolton, 55-56.

As the B&W directors had anticipated, the Brookline Branch proved a great financial success, one of the few lines to show a steady profit in the 1850s. By 1858 (the earliest passenger records date from that year), 259,000 riders were using the line annually.<sup>109</sup> Brookline's commuter population soared following the introduction of railroad service. By 1855, 173 Brookline residents were listed in the Boston City Directory. Significantly, only thirty-one of those names had appeared in the 1848 edition, the last published before the opening of the Brookline Branch.<sup>110</sup>

A substantial number of these new commuters chose to locate on streets near the Brookline Village Depot---especially along Linden Place and Harvard Place. As early as 1851, twenty of the thirty-seven taxpaying residents of these two short streets were Boston commuters. Only six of them had lived in the neighborhood in 1847.<sup>111</sup>

The B&W had much greater difficulty persuading Brookline's voters to support the extension of the line into Chestnut Hill. In 1852, the town twice voted against the projected Charles River Branch Railroad because the tracks would cross town roads at grade level. Once it became clear, however, that this line could be built without intruding into the Gardner Hill district and with minimal

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<sup>109</sup> Karr, 157.

<sup>110</sup> Boston City Directories, 1847-1855.

<sup>111</sup> Brookline, List of Taxes Assessed in the Town of Brookline and the Names of Taxpayers for the Years 1851, 1852, and 1853 (Boston, 1854) 12-13.

inconvenience and expense to the town government, opposition subsided and the line was constructed.<sup>112</sup>

The Charles River Railroad controversy offers important insights into the politics of development in Brookline at mid-century. On February 3, 1849 the state legislature's Committee on Railroads and Canals received a petition from Brookline residents opposing the project on the grounds that "no public necessity demanded the road, that no sufficient cause existed for taking private property, and that the scheme of Otis Petee and others were little better than the sanguine expectations of visionary projectors."

This anti-railroad petition contained a total of thirty-eight signatures. The signers were mostly Bostonians who owned Brookline country estates. At the head of the list stood the name of David Sears of Longwood. Other signers included Sears' sons-in-law, William Amory, Treasurer of the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company and George C. Crowninshield, scion of the Salem mercantile family; also, elderly Thomas Handasyd Perkins, Brookline's largest taxpayer, attorneys William Ingersoll Bowditch and Edward Dexter Sohier, bank president Ignatius Sargent, Boston landowner Eben Francis, and Boston merchants Harrison Fay, Amos Cotting, Jr. and Hugh R. Kendall. Most of the signers owned property in the Longwood area. Three resided in the Gardner Hill section and two near Brookline Village. In a day when \$25,000 was considered a fortune, these ten men were paying taxes to Brookline on property with an average assessed valuation of \$91,580.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Brookline, Town Records of Brookline, Massachusetts, vol. 1: 1838-1857 (Brookline, 1892) 332-333 and 361-363.

<sup>113</sup> Massachusetts General Court, Acts of 1849, Chapter 170, Legislative Packet; Brookline, List of Taxes...for the Years 1851, 1852, and 1853, 3-26.

On March 6, 1849, the railroad's Brookline supporters responded in a petition which "respectfully and earnestly" urged that the Charles River line be constructed. The 132 signers declared, in an obvious allusion to the non-resident status of many of the line's opponents, that they, in contrast to those opposing the railroad, were "legal voters and citizens of the Town of Brookline." It is significant that relatively few of the pro-railroad signers were men of great wealth or social prominence. Of the sixty-three whose occupations can be established, twenty-seven were agriculturalists (twenty-four farmers and three gardeners), while another twenty-one were associated with various trades (eleven carpenters, an architect, two painters, two blacksmiths, a mason, a teamster, a harnessmaker, a tanner, and a butcher). The petition contained the names of a handful of gentlemen, merchants, brokers and traders, residents of Gardner Hill section for the most part, who may have hoped that the railroad extension would bring commuter service closer to home. The vast majority of the signers, however, had no direct connection with Boston, economically or professionally. Their political influence in Brookline, on the other hand, was considerable. Eight of them had held Brookline town office in the preceding decade. James Bartlett, a farmer, was serving on the Board of Selectman. John W. Warren, another farmer, had been a member the year before. By contrast, only one of the anti-railroad petitioners, William Ingersoll Bowditch, had ever held office in Brookline, serving on the School Committee from 1846 to 1848.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Massachusetts General Court, Acts of 1849, Chapter 70, Legislative Packet; Kingman, 835-840.

These two petitions establish the contours of the politics of development in Brookline at mid-century. On one side stood a group of wealthy and socially prominent Bostonians, owners of country estates, men who had come to Brookline to escape the noise and confusion of the metropolis, and who now wished to preserve the special character of their retreat. On the other side stood a pro-growth element comprised of farmers who hoped the railroad would drive up the value of their acreage, and artisans who hoped that rapid development would generate job opportunities. An additional factor that made the Charles River Railroad project relatively attractive was its price tag. It would add nothing to Brookline's tax burden. The B&W was prepared to assume the full cost of construction.

This cost factor deserves emphasis. In the pre-1850 period, Brookline town meetings frequently rejected public improvement proposals when they threatened to increase taxes. Opposition to road building projects stemmed from a belief that the town would not benefit sufficiently to warrant the added expenses to which it would be put.<sup>115</sup> A proposal to build a road from Sewall's Point to the center of town, and thereby open the central section of Brookline to development, had been rejected several times in earlier years because any such road would have to cross marshland, which would involve substantial cost.

As late as 1849 the town voted "by a very large majority" to establish a committee to appear before the Norfolk County Commissioners to oppose by "every lawful and proper means" a proposal of George Griggs and sixty-two others for the construction of a public road extending from the western terminus

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<sup>115</sup> Curtis, 188.

of the Mill Dam across Brookline in a southwesterly direction to the Brighton line. As property values in the more densely settled area of Brookline appreciated after 1848, however, peripheral landowners began reconsidering their options and support for the proposed roadway gradually increased. As the number of commuters rose after 1848, land values near the Brookline Village depot rapidly increased. The contemplated roadway, which passed within a half mile of the depot, might serve to open a new district to similar development.<sup>116</sup>

When the Beacon Street proposal was reintroduced on March 4, 1850, with a request for a \$10,000 appropriation, Brookline's town meeting again rejected the idea, though now by a much closer vote of 50 to 42. Ten thousand dollars was a huge sum in 1849. The entire previous year's road and highway appropriation had amounted to only \$1,550.<sup>117</sup> The next town meeting again rejected the road building proposal, but now by an even closer margin of 81 to 73.<sup>118</sup> Thus by the spring of 1850 sentiment on the Beacon Street issue was almost evenly divided.

A major breakthrough came on October 17, 1850, when the voters of Brookline agreed to establish a committee, under the leadership of George Griggs, the roadway's principal advocate, to ascertain if the Boston & Roxbury Mill Corporation would assume a portion of the cost. Griggs and his allies doubtless already knew the answer.<sup>119</sup> On December 16, 1850 the committee,

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<sup>116</sup> Bolton, 56; Curtis, 199; Brookline Town Records, vol. 1: 301.

<sup>117</sup> Brookline, Town Records, vol. 1: 317 and 293.

<sup>118</sup> Curtis, 199.

<sup>119</sup> Curtis, 199-200.

following consultation with the Mill Dam officers, reported that the corporation was prepared to contribute \$2,000 on condition that the new road be built within a year. With this announcement resistance to the construction of Beacon Street collapsed, the town voting "by a very large majority" to inform the County Commissioners that it now favored laying out a roadway from the Mill Dam to Washington Street, and authorizing the Town Treasurer to borrow \$5,000 to get the project underway.<sup>120</sup>

As its opponents had feared, the construction of Beacon Street proved very expensive. The lower end of the roadway alone cost \$14,099. While the Mill Dam Corporation and sixteen individual subscribers provided \$3,350 toward its completion, the town was obliged to carry the sizeable balance.<sup>121</sup>

Asa Sheldon, an experienced road builder and engineer, was engaged to do the work. Sheldon recounted in his memoirs,

I went to Brookline to build a County road over half a mile of marsh and another half a mile through orchards, gardens and strawberry beds, and then through a piece of reclaimed swamp where English grass was mowed. The road was an expensive one, and the greatest saving in calculation, in the whole job, was in laying a strip of marsh grass each side of the road and raking it in for the horses to travel on while carting on the first gravel. After the road was completed over the reclaimed swamp, and we had passed over it with heavy loads for several days, down went about ten rods of it out of sight, and at once water flowed over to the depth of thirty-five feet. To buy the gravel and fill up this enormous mouth was quite an expense, but as I took the job by the yard it only made more work for us.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Brookline, Town Records, vol. 1: 340-341.

<sup>121</sup> Brookline, Report of the Committee of the Town of Brookline for Building a Road from the End of the Mill-Dam to Washington Street, February 25, 1853 (Brookline, 1853) 2-5.

<sup>122</sup> Asa Sheldon, Yankee Drover: Being the Unpretended Life of Asa

Beacon Street was built in two sections. The County Commissioners first authorized the construction of the part of the roadway lying west of Washington Street, presumably because that stretch posed fewer construction problems.<sup>123</sup> It was the finest road built in Brookline up to that time. An 1853 town report declared Beacon Street the first road "which has ever been laid out fifty feet wide, and built at the expense of the town."<sup>124</sup>

The largest single individual subscription to the Beacon Street fund, the sum of \$200, was provided by William Amory of Longwood, son-in-law of David Sears. What motivated Amory, a wealthy manufacturer, to make this sizeable contribution is unclear. He owned no land in the vicinity, apart from his Longwood residence, and while a commuter, the railroad depot at Longwood offered more convenient access to Boston than Beacon Street.

The motives that impelled the other fifteen subscribers to contribute are clearer. Nine of the fifteen owned farms or estates in the vicinity of the projected roadway, acreage which would increase in value once Beacon Street was completed. Three of them, David S. Coolidge, George Babcock, and William J. Griggs, all farmers, together owned nearly 200 acres near the point where Beacon Street would cross Harvard Street, a location later called Coolidge

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Sheldon, Farmer, Trader, and Working Man, 1788-1870 (Hanover: University of New Hampshire Press, 1988) 137.

<sup>123</sup> Norfolk County, Records of the County Commissioner, vol. 6: 35-39.

<sup>124</sup> Norfolk County, Records of the County Commissioners, vol. 6: 156-60; Brookline, Report...for Building a Road from the End of the Mill-Dam to Washington Street, February 25, 1853 , 2-5.

Corner. Four other subscribers owned land where Beacon and Washington Street would intersect. James Dana and Samuel S. Learned, though residents of Brighton, owned acreage fairly near the projected roadway. Two other subscribers owned property where the roadway would cross Brighton Street (Chestnut Hill Avenue), a remote location which Beacon Street would make more accessible.<sup>125</sup>

The remaining subscribers to the Beacon Street project were commuters. In addition to Amory, there was Henry Lee, Jr, whose family owned an estate on Brighton Street; two hardware merchants, George E. Bogman and Moses C. Warren; also, Harrison Fay and Harrison Bird, provisions merchants, owners of much Brookline commercial property. Bogman, Warren, Fay and Bird all resided in the Brookline Village area. "The building of Beacon Street gave quite an impetus to the growth of our section of the town," noted Charles H. Stearns in a 1903 address on the development of the Coolidge Corner area of Brookline.<sup>126</sup>

The third major transportation improvement was the introduction of horse railway service in 1859. The horsecar line, which belonged to the Metropolitan Railroad of Boston, the largest horsecar company in the city, ran by way of Roxbury Crossing and Tremont Street to the corner of Park and Tremont Streets in downtown Boston.<sup>127</sup> Its establishment led to the discontinuance of the

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<sup>125</sup> Jones, Map VIII.

<sup>126</sup> Brookline, Report...for Building a Road from the End of the Mill Dam to Washington Street, 2; Jones, map VIII; Charles H. Stearns, "The Sewall House," Proceedings of the Brookline Historical Society for 1903 (Brookline: Brookline Historical Society, 1903) 45.

<sup>127</sup> Edward W. Baker, "Brookline as it Appeared in the Seventies Briefly Reviewed," Brookline Chronicle, 8 May 1924: 23-27.

Wellman omnibus line. The horse railway, or horsecar, was a major improvement over the omnibus, traveling at almost twice the speed of its lumbering predecessor. The key to its speed was the use of rails. As Kenneth Jackson noted of this new mode of transportation, it combined "the low cost, flexibility and safety of animal power with the efficiency, smoothness, and all weather capability of rail right-of-way. The horsecar was, in short, a blend of the virtues of omnibus and train."<sup>128</sup>

The expansion of Boston's transportation system in the 1820 to 1860 period thus served to foster very different types of development in Brighton and Brookline. In Brighton, new and improved transportation facilities led to commercial and industrial growth, and only secondarily to residential development. In Brookline, by contrast, the improvements at first had little impact. The old elite had no pressing need of the services they provided. Later, however, in the aftermath of the opening of the Brookline Branch Railroad, a new type of commuter began to arrive in Brookline---less prosperous than earlier settlers, more numerous, and more needful of the services town government could provide. In the two decades that followed this new commuter element would transform Brookline from an agricultural town containing elite enclaves into a fully-developed commuter suburb.

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<sup>128</sup> Bradley H. Clarke, "A Century of Streetcars on Beacon Street," Rollsign: The Magazine of New England Transit News, January/ February, 1989, 3-8; Jackson, Crabgrass Frontier, 39.

### **CHAPTER THREE:**

### **MARKET TOWN**

By the late 1850s the towns of Brighton and Brookline had developed into very different communities. Brookline had become the suburb of preference of Boston's upper classes. Its convenience to Boston, lack of commercial and industrial development, physical attractiveness, and high social prestige were serving to attract large numbers of well-to-do commuters to the town. These newcomers quickly assumed political control, using their power to expand commuter-oriented public services.

That Brighton exerted much less attraction upon the commuter element should occasion little surprise. With its expanding fringe-zone economy (a growth that continued until 1865) and its great cattle market, it had much less to offer those seeking a zone of safety from the perils of urban life. Indeed, Brighton presented its own perils. Thousands of head of livestock were regularly herded through the streets of the market town, generating noise, dust, and subjecting passersby to the dangers of physical injury. Each week hundreds of dealers and drovers had to be accommodated in the town's hotels, where heavy drinking, carousing, gambling, and prostitution were commonplace. And finally, and most decisively, Brighton's noxious industries emitted foul odors and practiced unhealthy waste disposal methods, which made the market town a prime candidate for periodic outbreaks of epidemic disease. In Brighton, moreover, the long-entrenched entrepreneurial element continued to dominate

town government, placing its interests ahead of those of the purely residential element whose livelihood was earned outside of the town.

Both communities were growing in these years, but the patterns were strikingly different. In Brookline growth took the form primarily of middle and upper class residential development. In Brighton's development was chiefly commercial, with class-mixed residential building following in the wake of business expansion.

Both towns experienced rapid population increase in the 1840 to 1865 period. In 1840 each contained about 1,400 inhabitants. Brighton's population rose more rapidly than Brookline's in the 1820 to 1840 period (103 versus 52 percent). This trend reversed itself in the 1850s, however, following the introduction of rail passenger service, with Brookline's overall population surging well ahead of Brighton's (a 278 versus 136 percent increase for the decade alone). Thus by 1860 Brookline contained three residents for every two in Brighton---5,164 versus 3,375 inhabitants.<sup>1</sup>

The social demographics of the two communities were strikingly dissimilar. Working class housing in Brookline was largely concentrated in one confined neighborhood, a district bordering the Muddy River and the tracks of the

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<sup>1</sup> Boston, Annual Report of the Registry Department, 1901 (Boston, 1901) Table A-1900; Karr, 154; Curtis, 213. Neither town was densely populated, however. While Brighton contained about 90 residents per acre and Brookline about 60 in 1850, these overall density figures tell us little about the real character of the towns. Brookline contained about 40 percent more acreage than Brighton, but its public transportation facilities (the Brookline Branch and Charles River Railroads and omnibus and horsecar lines) did not extend into the sparsely settled southern two fifths of the town. Also, much of Brighton's acreage was occupied by commercial and industrial enterprises, while the developed areas of Brookline were more uniformly residential.

Brookline Branch Railroad, which left the rest of the town open to middle and upper class residential development. Contact with the working classes was thereby minimized. In Brighton, where commercial and industrial facilities were widely diffused, working class housing was widespread, which meant greater class contact. While most of the house construction in Brookline in the 1850s and 1860s, outside of the immigrant district, consisted of middle and upper class structures, in Brighton most of the new residential construction accommodated working class families.

Both towns greatly expanded governmental services in the 1840 to 1865 period, a phenomenon general to urban centers and neighboring communities. But while Brookline invested its resources in a wide range of services, calculated to enhance the town's appeal to the commuter element, Brighton's business-dominated leadership was ever mindful of the impact such services might have on their own fringe enterprises which were the engine of the local economy, and so provided services much more selectively. Many of the services Brookline introduced in this period (street and drainage improvements, street lighting, stricter public health regulations, and more vigorous law enforcement), Brighton's leaders declined to furnish.

Adams' 1849 Almanac and Business Directory described mid-century Brighton as "a place of much business and general industry and thrift."<sup>2</sup> The Brighton Cattle Market was doing almost \$3 million of business a year in the sale

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<sup>2</sup> George Adams, An Almanac and Business Directory of the Cities of Roxbury, Cambridge and Charlestown and the Towns of Dorchester, Brookline, Brighton, Medford, Somerville and Chelsea for the Year 1849 (Boston, 1849) 173.

of livestock.<sup>3</sup> By 1860 the town's vigorous fringe zone economy included forty slaughter houses, capitalized at \$542,500, which produced annually nearly \$4.2 million of meat, hides, pelts, tallow and other animal by-products.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Brighton manufactured such products as fireworks, whale and sperm oil, soap, lard, lampblack, cordage, and bone fertilizer.<sup>5</sup>

Alongside Brighton's booming industrial economy, moreover, stood its many market gardening and horticultural establishments. In 1860 Brighton's fifty-six farms (an increase from thirty-five in 1850) occupied almost 60 percent of the town's surface area. These market gardens and nurseries, capitalized at more than \$600,000, produced a wide variety of fruit and vegetables for the expanding Boston market.<sup>6</sup>

That Brighton's industrial and agricultural economies were growing rapidly is evidenced by the 1850 and 1860 federal industrial and agricultural schedules. The value of manufactures (apart from the products of its slaughtering industry, for which no figures exist) more than doubled in the 1850s, rising from \$135,800 to \$276,787, while land under cultivation increased from 866 to 1,337 acres, or by 54 percent. While Brookline's farm acreage also increased in these years, the gain was a more modest 10 percent.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> "The Cattle Fair Hotel and Cattle Trade," The Item, 2 June 1889: 5.

<sup>4</sup> U. S. Census, 1860, Agricultural Schedule, Brighton.

<sup>5</sup> U. S. Census, 1850 and 1860, Industrial Schedules, Brighton; Plan of the Town of Brighton by H. M. Wightman, 1866.

<sup>6</sup> U. S. Census, 1860, Agricultural Schedule, Brighton; Wilder, 49-51.

<sup>7</sup> U. S. Census, Industrial and Agricultural Schedules, 1850 and 1860, Brighton and Brookline.

Government also expanded in the 1840s. Before 1841, Brighton provided its residents with only the most basic services. In the 1830s, the town's average annual expenditure totaled less than \$4,000, with almost all of it going to public education, roads, and poor relief.<sup>8</sup> In the 1840s, by contrast, the average annual expenditure stood at almost \$12,000.<sup>9</sup>

The most striking feature of this remarkable expansion of public spending was the absence of conflict in the town meetings that authorized the expenditures. The history of nearby Cambridge in the same period, Henry Binford writes, involved a struggle between local entrepreneurs and Boston commuters for control of town government, a struggle the commuters ultimately won. "Between 1830 and 1838," notes Binford, the commuters "borrowed institutions and rhetoric from Boston with remarkable speed. Far in advance of any pressing need, Cambridge acquired services and amenities only recently introduced in the city."<sup>10</sup> No such struggle occurred in Brighton where the commuter element was weak. Brighton's leaders borrowed institutions and rhetoric from Boston, but they accommodated them to the interests of the town's booming fringe zone economy.

Though growth in Brighton was driven by commercial and industrial expansion rather than commuter-driven residential development, the town's

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<sup>8</sup> As late as 1840 these areas of public expenditure accounted for 83 percent of the town's spending, with another 11 percent compensating town officers. Brighton, Annual Report of Receipts and Expenditures for 1840-41 (Cambridge, 1841) 5-6.

<sup>9</sup> Brighton, Annual Reports of Receipts and Expenditures, 1840-1849.

<sup>10</sup> Binford, 114.

population rose by 65 percent in the 1840s, the greatest increase it was to experience prior to the 1880s.<sup>11</sup> Newcomers included many aspiring businessmen, drawn to the market town by the opportunities for profit afforded by its expanding economy. Such men found ready acceptance, quickly rising to a position of social and political equality with the members of older families. Of the twelve individuals who served as Selectmen in the 1840s, for example, seven had arrived since the early 1820s. One of the two men chosen as state representative in the 1840s, horticulturalist Joseph Breck, arrived in 1836, less than a decade before his election.<sup>12</sup>

There was moreover little to differentiate the new class of business leaders from the town's earlier officeholders. Local businessmen dominated Brighton's affairs in the 1840 to 1865 period just as they had in earlier times. Every one of the twelve men chosen as Selectmen in the 1840s owned a local business (three market gardeners, three produce dealers, three butchers, and three horticulturalists). The pattern of the 1850s and early 1860s was quite similar.<sup>13</sup> These local businessmen controlled the government not by virtue of

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<sup>11</sup> Boston, Annual Report of the Registry Department, 1901 (Boston, 1901) Table A-1900.

<sup>12</sup> Brighton, Auditor's Report for 1864 with a Chronological Table of the Town Records (Boston, 1864) 115-123.

<sup>13</sup> One of these men, Zebina L. Raymond of North Brighton, a produce dealer with offices in the Faneuil Hall Market in Boston, moved to Cambridge in the late 1840s, eventually becoming the fifth Mayor of that city. Brighton, Auditor's Report for the Year 1863-1864 with a Chronological Table of the Town Records (Boston, 1864) 114-123; Boston, City Directory for 1848; Winship, vol. 2: 186.

their numbers, but rather by virtue of their stewardship of a fringe zone economy that was generating prosperity and employment.

The town's working class did not involve itself in politics to an appreciable degree. Many workers were unnaturalized immigrants. Many lived in Brighton only temporarily. Even those who had the vote did not participate in large numbers. By 1854, the year Brighton published its first tax valuation list, 669 residents were eligible to participate in town meetings. Yet the numbers that actually did so rarely rose above 20 percent of the electorate. In 1855, almost one-third of the town's male heads of household (most of them belonging to the working class) were ineligible to vote in town meetings, not having paid a poll tax.<sup>14</sup> It is impossible to say, given the paucity of evidence, whether this lack of involvement was caused by economic constraints or by indifference, but the lack of participation was manifest in the small number of votes cast in town meetings.

By the mid-1840s Brighton's expanding cattle and slaughtering industries were creating serious health and public safety problems---problems that disturbed immediate abutters and rendered parts of the town unsuitable for middle and upper class development. Dissatisfied abutters began petitioning the town to ameliorate these conditions, but they lacked the numbers to reshape public policy.

It must be emphasized, however, that Brighton's business-dominated leadership was not opposed to change per se, only to measures that jeopardized the town's prosperous and still expanding fringe-zone economy. Indeed,

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<sup>14</sup> Brighton, Annual Report of Receipts and Expenditures for 1854-55 with a List of the Taxpayers in Brighton for 1854 (Cambridge, 1855) 17-35; Massachusetts, Census of 1855, Brighton.

Brighton's leaders desired that the market town project a dynamic, progressive image. Anxious as they were to protect their various enterprises, they were also eager to create a more positive cultural and social environment for their families. There was little prestige associated with residence in Brighton, a town noted chiefly for its slaughterhouses, piggeries, and fertilizer plants.<sup>15</sup> This could be offset to some degree by providing the town with first-rate public facilities and by building up its educational, cultural and religious infrastructure. The effort to accomodate three goals---sustained growth for its fringe-zone economy, the projection of a more positive public image, and the creation of a suitable middle class environment---produced a pattern of governmental services in Brighton that was significantly different from that of neighboring towns like Cambridge and Brookline.

The reluctance of the town's business leadership to invest in improved roads, drainage, and street lighting is explained by three factors. First, such facilities would tend to encourage residential development, and Brighton's business leaders were not anxious to attract a large commuter element to the town. Already by the late 1840s (as will be seen below), the town's commuters were joining hands with some of its major landowners (who saw an opportunity to profit from subdivision of their acreage for residential development) to demand

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<sup>15</sup> Middle and upper class residents were apparently deeply embarassed by Brighton's image as a center of nuisance industries. Winship recounts how vacationing residents were in the habit of recording their place of abode in hotel registers as "Boston," because of this negative image. The concern to promote a more positive image is reflected also in the town's policy of offering religious, charitable, and cultural organizations the free use of the town hall for meetings. Among the organizations so favored was an Anti-Gambling Society, the lyceum, and various religious groups. Winship, The Item, 26 April 1886: 4; Brighton Town Records, vol. 3: 514 and 75; Adams, Almanac for 1849, 96-97.

stricter regulation of the cattle and slaughtering trade and more rigorous policing of the cattle market's transient element, an initiative that threatened the well-being of the cattle and slaughtering trades. An increase in the number of commuters would only serve to enhance the political power of those demanding regulation. Secondly, the maintenance of roads, sewers and other transportation-related facilities would be especially difficult and costly in a town where cattle drives and heavy teaming subjected roadways to constant wear and tear. Thirdly, even if its leaders had desired to furnish such facilities, Brighton would have found it more difficult to support them than revenue rich Brookline, which by 1860 was spending 37 percent of its budget just on roads, drainage, and street-lighting.

Instead, Brighton invested in public facilities and other services which posed little danger to its fringe-zone economy. Rising slowly in the 1830s, the demands for increased governmental services would appear to have reached a critical mass in 1841.<sup>16</sup> A proposal to build a town hall had been under

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<sup>16</sup> Some expansion of governmental activities occurred in the 1830s, but progress was highly uneven, the electorate still being very cost-conscious. The modest gains the town made came mostly in more familiar areas of governmental activity---some school construction, some road building, and the improvement of the town's fire-fighting apparatus. Town meetings in the 1830s were relatively tame affairs, involving little public controversy. Having reached decisions in private, Brighton's leaders had little trouble orchestrating these gatherings. Attendance rarely exceeded one hundred persons. In the entire decade, only two issues led to a serious breach of civic harmony. Both arose in the late 1830s. The first involved the question of who owned the old First Parish Hall (which served as a combination town hall, schoolhouse and enginehouse), the town government or the First Parish Church. This issue was settled amicably after several months of delicate negotiations. More disruptive was a controversy touching upon the town's business interests---the question of how many public auctioneers Brighton should employ. The post of town auctioneer was extremely important since this official presided over the buying and selling of livestock at the weekly cattle market. The protagonists were Francis Winship, State Senator

consideration for several years. Not until 1841, however, did Brighton proceed with its construction. The establishment of a high school had likewise been discussed in the late 1830s, but the town had failed to act. In 1839 twenty-one residents took the initiative by subscribing to a fund to establish an academy, hoping that the town government would assume financial responsibility for the institution once established and thereby convert it into a public high school. They calculated correctly.<sup>17</sup>

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and horticulturalist, who proposed that a second auctioneer be named, and slaughterhouse proprietor Emery Rice, who opposed any increase. After prolonged debate, the town resolved the issue by indefinitely postponing it, which gave the victory to Rice and to the status quo. Brighton Town Records, vol. 2: 18, 41, 124-125, 141-143, 185, 197, and 218; Brighton Town Records, vol. 2: 213, 279, 290, and 293.

<sup>17</sup> Though established in 1841 in the academy building, not until 1847-48 did the town purchase the property, at which point the names of the academy subscribers were published in the town records. Assuming that the twenty-one shareholders of 1847-48 were the primary movers in the campaign to establish a public high school (a reasonable assumption given their willingness to relinquish control of the property to the town for a small sum), we can make the following generalizations about the early supporters of the high school. They were a fairly well-to-do element, all married men, mostly in their thirties and forties, many with rather large families. While they represented a wide spectrum of occupations, most were situated firmly in the commercial sector of the economy. Two storekeepers headed the list. Charles Heard, who owned Brighton's largest dry-goods establishment and was serving as Brighton's state representative, bought one third of the school fund's sixty shares. The other storekeeper, Town Clerk William Warren, proprietor of Brighton's only drugstore, bought five shares. The other multiple shareholders were James Dana, farmer and slaughterhouse proprietor; Daniel Kingsley, Bank of Brighton cashier; Cephas Brackett, merchant, landowner, and manufacturer; Charles Dana, farmer and slaughterhouse proprietor; Henry Hildreth, Brighton Center blacksmith and major landowner; and George H. Brooks, farmer and slaughterhouse proprietor. The other subscribers (holding only one share apiece) included two hotelkeepers, two horticulturalists, two builders, a banker, a tanner, three butchers, including the proprietor of Roxbury's Dudley Market, and a major landowner who also served as President of the Brighton-based Citizen's Mutual Fire Insurance Company. Brighton, Annual Report of Receipts and Expenditures for 1847-48 (Boston,

Thus the measures of 1841 represented the culmination of several years of effort. In that year Brighton built an elaborate Greek Revival style town hall, the work of local architect and lumber merchant Granville Fuller, costing \$7,278 (48 percent of the total budget), established Brighton High School, and significantly upgraded its fire fighting facilities. The 1841 appropriation reached an impressive \$15,104.12---three times the level of spending in neighboring Brookline. What makes this high expenditure the more unusual was its context, the Boston area then being in the depths of a major depression.<sup>18</sup>

The area of government spending that increased most dramatically, however, was that of public education. Public schooling had existed in Brighton since 1722, when the first Little Cambridge schoolhouse was established by local subscription at the crossroads later known as Brighton Center. The services the public schools provided were quite limited, however. As late as 1830 the town was served by four district schools, which provided young people with basic skills at minimal cost to the taxpayer. Small towns like Brighton offered no schooling beyond the primary level. Higher education was available in private grammar schools and academies for those who could afford additional training.<sup>19</sup>

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1848) 8-9; Winship, vol. 2: 2-3; Winship, vol 1: 186, 212 and 77; Winship, vol. 2: 154; Winship, vol. 1: 212; Winship, vol 2: 207-208; Winship, vol. 1: 156.

<sup>18</sup> Brighton, Annual Report of Receipts and Expenditures for 1841-42 (Cambridge, 1842) 5-7; Reginald Charles McGrane, The Panic of 1837: Some Financial Problems of the Jacksonian Era (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965) 132.

<sup>19</sup> Brighton contained many private schools before the school reforms of the 1840s. They were usually run by graduates of nearby Harvard College. Jacob Knapp (Harvard, 1802) taught a well-known private classical school for boys in his house on Bowen Hill at the western end of Brighton in the 1820s. Hosea Hildreth (Harvard, 1805) likewise operated a noted private school in Brighton early in the century. Exemplifying the heavy reliance that the wealthy

Moreover, district schools were highly unsystematic in the way they functioned. Since there was no standard age for admission or advancement and no mandatory attendance laws, irregular attendance was the norm, with age no guide to the level of preparation. Children of widely varying ages received instruction from a single teacher in a single classroom. The typical school year was short, with the school calendar being divided into two brief sessions (winter and summer) of about three months, and many students attending just one term. The lack of student classification obliged instructors to rely upon rote learning

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element placed upon private schools before the 1840s was the educational experience of William Henry Baldwin, the son of of a prosperous grocer. Born in 1826, Baldwin began his education in the late 1820s at Mrs. William Brown's infant school, which the widow kept in the town hall from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m six days a week, his father paying the teacher twelve and a half cents per week. Young Baldwin moved next, at age seven, to the Centre District School, kept by "Master Abel Rice," situated on the ground floor of the old town hall building. Rice had kept school in several towns before moving to Brighton, most notably in industrial East Cambridge, where he had charge of the boys connected with a major glass factory. According to Winship, "he was very strict and formal but his pupils learned much." Trained as a brick mason, Rice combined masonry with district school teaching for some years. In 1836, however, he acquired a sizeable parcel of land in North Brighton, on which he established a strawberry farm. He also added rooms to the rear of his home in which he continued to teach a private school for some years. In the absence of a grammar school, Baldwin next entered a private school kept by Josiah Rutter (who in 1839 became headmaster of the private academy that later became Brighton High School); then a private academy which Jonas Wilder and two assistants operated in the old Foster Mansion on Foster Street just outside of Brighton Center. Many of the wealthier families in town sent their children (girls as well as boys) to Wilder's school, which enjoyed a widespread reputation for excellence. The well-to-do also sent their children to schools in other communities. At age six Francis Lyman Winship, son of the owner of Winship's Gardens, was sent to Seth Davis' private school in West Newton. In 1839, the School Committee complained that \$900 a year was being paid out to private schools at a time when Brighton's entire appropriation for public education stood at \$1,200. Winsor, vol. 2: 606; Winship, vol. 1: 104-107, 136-137 and 217-219; Winship vol. 2: 74; Brighton, Annual Report of the School Committee for 1838-39, 11.

and memorization as their primary teaching methodology. In addition, teachers were often poorly prepared, though the winter term (taught by a man and attended mostly by older boys) sometimes utilized Harvard students as teachers.<sup>20</sup>

The district schools of the 1830s also lacked central heating, lavatories, and indoor plumbing, while ventilation systems, furniture and instructional materials were seriously inadequate. The 1838-39 Brighton School Committee report noted:

The internal arrangement of every school-room is decidedly injurious and defective. In two or three instances, the committee found the children dependent upon a thorough and constant bracing of their hands and feet to keep themselves in an upright position. Thus...they become wearied with school and uninterested in their studies. Hence, too, we find the cause of many diseases which riper years will disclose to our view.<sup>21</sup>

Commercial and industrial centers like Brighton provided fertile ground for the spread of the common school movement which called for the establishment of publicly funded schools with uniform curricula. The movement was fueled by a far-reaching economic, social, and cultural transformation. The development of an interregional transportation system, a marked decline in subsistence farming

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<sup>20</sup> Carl F. Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983) 13-29; David Tyack and Elizabeth Hanslot, Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership in America, 1820-1980 (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1983) 29-30; Michael B. Katz, The Irony of Early School Reform: Educational Innovation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Massachusetts (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968) 50-62.

<sup>21</sup> Brighton, Annual Report of the School Committee for 1838-39 (unpublished) 9.

and household manufactures, and the rise of industry along with its concomitant, wage-labor, contributed to this major change in the character of American society. The new urban-industrial economy that was developing in the United States at mid-century also attracted large numbers of European immigrants, which added to its cultural diversity and contributed new ethnic tensions.<sup>22</sup> The common school movement was led by a set of reformers who, as educational historian Carl Kaestle has written, "advocated government action to improve the economy, shape the morals, and unify the culture of mid-nineteenth century America."<sup>23</sup> They were predominately Anglo-American in origin, Protestant in religion, and middle class in social status. They were also thoroughly convinced of the superiority of their moral values, but uncertain as to whether those values would prevail in an America whose urban centers were becoming more and more pluralistic. "The common school promoters believed," Kaestle writes, "that republican government had to be based on a common culture." The common schools would serve to convert outsiders to that culture.<sup>24</sup>

Brighton's business leadership found the common school ideology compelling. Comprehensive public education would benefit business by fostering the skills upon which its growth depended and by bolstering the value system of free enterprise. Educational improvements would also serve to enhance Brighton's reputation and through it the social status of its entrepreneurial

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<sup>22</sup> Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic, 64.

<sup>23</sup> Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic, 77.

<sup>24</sup> Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic, 99.

families. It would likewise promote social stability by engrafting the dominant culture upon the children of its growing and culturally alien immigrant population.

Notably, school reform came to Brighton earlier than many neighboring towns, including Brookline. Moreover there is no evidence in the town records of any significant opposition to the investment of the town's resources in the improvement and expansion of its schools. The establishment of Brighton High School in 1841 offers the best example. As Michael Katz noted in The Irony of Early School Reform, support for high schools tended to come from financial elites that believed that such institutions would foster industrial prosperity.<sup>25</sup> Brighton's government was dominated throughout the pre-Civil War period by just such an elite. The market town was one of the first communities near Boston to establish a publicly funded high school. As late as 1848 there were fewer than a dozen such institutions in all of Massachusetts, the state that was the nation's leader in educational reform.<sup>26</sup> When the proposal to establish a high school was formally presented to the town at a March 22, 1841 meeting, no opposition arose. The committee appointed to study the issue reported that it was "unanimously of the opinion that there is great need of a Free High School in this town and that it is imperatively incumbent on the citizens of Brighton to establish one forthwith, on a liberal scale, and which shall meet the present and growing necessities of the place." The town records noted that the discussion was "characterized by great harmony and apparent unanimity of feeling."<sup>27</sup> Brighton was exceptional

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<sup>25</sup> Michael B. Katz, The Irony of Early School Reform, 27-28.

<sup>26</sup> Ellwood P. Cubberley, Public Education in the United States: A Study and Interpretation of American Educational History (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin, 3rd ed., 1947) 259; Brighton Town Records, vol. 2: 468.

<sup>27</sup> Support for Brighton High School continued to be strong despite a

also in establishing two grammar schools in the 1840s as part of the movement toward increased student classification or grading. The commitment to classification was evident in the School Committee's 1849-50 annual report, which declared: "The ancient plan, which brought together pupils of all ages and attainments under the same instructor...was as discouraging and ill-suited to the less advanced, as it was fatal to much progress in the more. We should hail with gladness, and seek to make more perfect still, the classification of schools." The School Committee urged parents to think of the school system in industrial terms. Like an "extensive manufactory," it observed, the schools were designed to bring out "beautifully and completely, part by part, each in its own way and time, its appointed work."<sup>28</sup>

The residents of Brighton gave strong support to its public schools not only by providing them with generous financial support, but also by patronizing them in higher numbers than neighboring towns. By 1847 there were no private schools whatever in Brighton.<sup>29</sup> In 1852-53, overall public school attendance

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gradual reduction in the proportion of students attending the school. In its early years (1841-46) the high school functioned as a combined grammar and high school, with a very large enrollment. Over the years, however, its enrollment steadily declined. The first major decrease came in the late 1840s, following the establishment of two intermediate schools, when enrollment fell by about forty percent, but its numbers continued to fall as admission requirements were gradually tightened. By the early 1870s, only 15 percent of the appropriate age group (students ages 14 to 16) were attended the high school. Despite this narrowing base of patronage, however, no significant opposition to the high school emerged. Brighton Town Records, vol. 2: 390-402.

<sup>28</sup> Brighton, Annual Report of the School Committee for 1849-50 (Cambridge, 1850) 6.

<sup>29</sup> Brighton, Annual Report of the School Committee for 1846-47 (Cambridge, 1847) 15.

stood at a remarkable 91 percent, the 22nd highest rate among the 322 communities in Massachusetts. All of its immediate neighbors relied on private schools to a greater extent than the market town, ranking well below it in attendance rates---Watertown stood 140th in the state; Brookline, 143rd; Boston, 160th; Cambridge, 176th; and Newton, 232nd.<sup>30</sup>

Not all levels of the Brighton Public Schools were patronized by all classes equally, however. While theoretically open to all residents, high schools rarely served working class children. The earliest extant list of Brighton High School students, dating from 1872, makes this clear. We have already taken note of the declining rate of high school attendance in the 1841 to 1872 period. Only fifty-one students were attending Brighton High School in 1872, at a time when the town contained nearly a thousand households. The 1872 graduating class comprised a mere seven students. Moreover, the taxes the parents of these students paid averaged \$209, or the 86th percentile of property ownership.<sup>31</sup> Thus by 1872 Brighton High School was serving both a very limited and a highly affluent element of the town's population.

Public school policymaking was the one area of town government that Brighton's businessmen relinquished to others. A comparative analysis of the occupational and educational backgrounds of Brighton's School Committee members versus its prudential committee members shows that the town tended to pick its best educated residents to serve on the School Committee, while

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<sup>30</sup> Brighton, Annual Report of the School Committee for 1852-53 (Cambridge, 1853) 16.

<sup>31</sup> Brighton, Official Reports for 1872-73 (Boston, 1873) 30-31 and 154-157.

relying on market gardeners, butchers and traders (local businessmen) to fill prudential committee positions. The absence from School Committee ranks of representatives of the cattle and slaughtering industries should not be construed, however, as signalling a loss of political influence by that element, but rather as reflecting a disposition on their part to allow those with greater formal education to play the principal public role in the school reform effort, thereby enhancing the reputation of the system.

Of the twenty-three men who served on the Brighton School Committee between 1841 and 1861, ten were college graduates (eight ministers, a physician, and a teacher), while three others, two horticulturalists and an apothecary, could claim some degree of intellectual distinction. One of the three, Joseph Breck, was the most important horticulturalist in the state. A former editor of The New England Farmer, the region's leading agricultural publication, owner and publisher of The Horticultural Register, President of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society from 1859 to 1862, and author of The Flower Garden, Breck added luster to the Brighton School Committee. The other two, J. L. L. F. Warren and William Warren, though less well known, were nonetheless men of intellectual attainment: the former, a well-known horticulturalist, popular lecturer, and an intimate friend of William Cullen Bryant, the latter an apothecary and amateur scientist who wrote The Origins of the Material Universe (1850).<sup>32</sup>

The frequent election of ministers to the School Committee is noteworthy. Three factors made Protestant ministers especially attractive---their moral

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<sup>32</sup> Winship, vol. 1: 177-180; John R. Stilgoe, Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb, 1820-1939 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988) 33; Benson, 122-136; Winship, vol. 1: 185-186 and 194.

stature, their high level of education, and their commitment to the Protestant-republican ideology that lay at the core of the common school program. Of the sixty school committee posts filled by the town in the 1841 to 1861 period, clergymen occupied a total of thirty-three, some 55 percent of all openings. There were churches of five denominations in Brighton in 1861: the Unitarian First Parish (1744), Evangelical Congregationalist (1827), Baptist (1853), Roman Catholic (1855) and Universalist (1860).<sup>33</sup> While ministers of all four Protestant denominations served on the Brighton School Committee in the pre-Civil War period, the cultural agenda of the common school movement and the prevalent nativist and anti-Catholic sentiments of that era made the election of a Catholic (clergyman or layman) unlikely.

Significantly only two of the twenty-three school committee members had a direct connection to the cattle and slaughtering trades and none at all were farmers. By contrast, the positions on Brighton's various prudential committees (with their more mundane responsibilities and declining importance) went to seven farmers, six butchers, two cattle brokers, a drover, two traders and a wharf owner. No professional, no college educated resident, and no minister served on a prudential committee in the 1841 to 1861 period. Yet a number of the men who served on these committees were figures of considerable importance in the town--men like Emery Willard, a major north Brighton landowner; Jacob F. Taylor, a slaughterhouse proprietor who later served as President of the Brighton Abattoir; David Collins and Elias Bennett, both major cattle dealers; and Hiram Barker, a well-to-do starch manufacturer. Prudential committee members also frequently

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<sup>33</sup> Frederic A. Whitney, "Brighton," in Samuel Drake, ed., History of Middlesex County, Massachusetts, vol. 3 (Boston, 1880) 288-290.

held key offices in town government---serving as Selectmen, assessors, town treasurer and town clerk. Nor is there any evidence in the town records of conflict between the general school committee and prudential committee members after 1841.

When the interests of the fringe zone economy came into conflict with that of the schools, however, the schools lost out, evidencing the business element's ultimate and ongoing domination of Brighton politics. The Brighton Cattle Market, which brought large numbers of transients into the community on a weekly basis, to the great profit of the cattle dealers, slaughterhouse proprietors, and hotel keepers, posed serious dangers for the school children of Brighton. Conditions were especially severe at the center of town. The School Committee called for more effective policing of the community in the early 1840s. It pointed first to the moral danger stemming from contact with the rough element that frequented the cattle market.

It is a matter of regret, that our children and youth are exposed to so many bad influences in some parts of our town. The character and conduct of one class of those persons who are on Monday [Market Day] attracted to Brighton, are such, that our children cannot go to school without having their ears filled with obscene and profane language, which cannot fail to do harm to young minds.

The committee also complained of the physical hazards market day activities posed for schoolchildren.

In addition to this, their very lives are often in danger from the teams which obstruct our sidewalks, and if they betake themselves to the street, they are, especially in the afternoon, endangered of being run over by the furious driving of intoxicated bipeds, (we cannot call them men without a blush,)

who often manifest more brutality than the poor quadrupeds they are suffered to torture.

The 1843-44 annual report charged that it was outsiders, not residents of the town, who were creating the problem.

This nuisance does not come from the inhabitants of this town...but from those who are drawn here from abroad, and your committee would respectfully inquire if it must be submitted to in silence.

Must the town of Brighton thus proclaim to the world that the morals, lives and limbs of their sons and daughters are nothing in comparison with the privilege of exhibiting in her streets a broken down horse and the drunken animal that rides him?

The committee concluded its appeal for more effective policing by suggesting either an expansion of the town's constabulary or a reorganization of the school calendar.

Your committee would respectfully suggest that a special police be appointed to clear the sidewalks and abate the nuisance, or that the Schools in the centre of the town be suspended on Monday, and taught all day on Saturday. In this case the responsibility of taking care of the children will devolve upon the parents.<sup>34</sup>

The town proved unresponsive. No additional policing was provided. Instead, new schools were built in locations where contact with the cattle market would be minimized. The public safety issue played a part in the 1855 decision to construct a new high school building on Academy Hill, on land adjacent to the old

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<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, there is no way to determine the frequency of these incidents of dangerous and disorderly behavior. The town reports shed no additional light on the problem and no local newspaper existed in that time. Brighton, Annual Report of the School Committee for 1843-44 (Cambridgeport, 1844) 8-9.

structure, rather than nearer the center of town, as some were urging.<sup>35</sup> The majority viewpoint---that nothing should be allowed to jeopardize the well-being of the town's key industries---prevailed in the end over the recommendations of Brighton's educational reformers.

On the other hand, Brighton was quite openhanded in appropriating money to construct modern facilities for its schools. The second grammar school, which opened in December 1848, is a case in point. This facility was at first located in a wooden structure at the intersection of North Harvard Street and Western Avenue in the northern section of town. When the original building burned to the ground in February 1853, it was promptly replaced with a new brick edifice costing a substantial \$12,000.<sup>36</sup>

Vast improvements were made in Brighton's school facilities in the next two decades. While the 1840 school plant had consisted of four cramped wooden buildings, by the mid-1860s Brighton's eleven schools (seven primary schools, two grammar schools, a high school and an evening school) were housed in eight relatively new structures. A new High School building, with the Centre Primary School occupying its first floor (1866), the Bennett Grammar School (1861), and the Harvard Grammar School (1853) were all exceptionally well-housed. The primary schools were also situated in relatively new and well-appointed buildings: the West Primary School (1855), the North Primary School

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<sup>35</sup> Brighton Town Records, vol. 3: 467-468.

<sup>36</sup> Brighton, Annual Report of the School Committee for 1852-53 (Cambridge, 1853) 8.

(1856), the Union Street Primary School (1861) and the East Primary School (1864).<sup>37</sup>

By the early 1870s the Brighton Public Schools had attained an organizational complexity calculated to meet the needs of an urban-industrial society. In place of the single-level district schools the town was now providing four distinct levels of instruction (primary, intermediate [upper primary division], grammar, and high school) subdivided into thirteen grades.<sup>38</sup> In contrast to the pre-1841 period, when the object of public education had been the relatively simple one of teaching basic literacy, with parents required to furnish textbooks, by 1872 the Brighton schools were offering a totally publicly-financed, richly varied program of studies that encouraged its charges, through its strong emphasis on rhetoric and writing skills, "to talk of what they observed" and "to cultivate freedom and accuracy in the use of language," a program that provided, in addition to traditional subjectmatter, instruction in music, drawing and physical education. The curriculum at Brighton High School (where one could enroll in either a general or a classical program) was by the 1870s in some respects more varied than that of many contemporary high schools. In the field of mathematics,

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<sup>37</sup> Brighton, Annual Report of the School Committee for 1864-65 (Boston, 1865) 2; Brighton, Annual Report of the School Committee for 1866-67 (Boston, 1867) 18.

<sup>38</sup> In 1873, in the last year of its existence as an independent town, Brighton added a kindergarten to its grade system. When the new Everett Primary School in North Allston opened in the fall of 1873, it contained so many young students at its lowest level, that the school committee decided to divide the group, placing the youngest members under a teacher trained in the kindergarten method. This was the first kindergarten established in what is now the Boston Public Schools, though it was discontinued shortly after Brighton's 1874 annexation to Boston. Boston, Annual Report of the School Committee for 1902 (Boston, 1902) 86.

for example, it was offering courses in algebra, geometry, trigonometry, and surveying; in the sciences, physiology, chemistry, astronomy, and botany; and in foreign languages, Latin, French, German, and Greek.<sup>39</sup>

The strong commitment to the common school reform program was reflected also in the increased number of school personnel and in the degree of specialized training required of its teachers. Whereas there had been only four teachers in the whole system in 1840, by 1873 there were twenty-five, with most graduates of teacher training schools. The great majority were women (in 1873 eighty percent were females).<sup>40</sup> Unmarried women were encouraged to enter the teaching profession because women were thought to be better equipped than men to meet the needs of children, especially very young children. But there were economic reasons for the feminization of the profession as well. Women teachers received less compensation than their male counterparts. Since the cost of school improvements was high, any measure that served to reduce expenses without jeopardizing the reform program was welcome.<sup>41</sup> The employment of female teachers enabled the schools to divert resources to the improvement of school facilities and other costly programs.

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<sup>39</sup> Brighton, Official Reports for 1873 (Boston, 1873) 43-61 and 29.

<sup>40</sup> Brighton, Annual Report of the School Committee for 1864-65, 3-9; Brighton, Annual Report of the School Committee for 1872-73, 23-29.

<sup>41</sup> David Nasaw, Schooled to Order: A Social History of Public Schooling in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979) 62-63; Kaestle, 123-127; Richard M. Bernard and Maris A. Vinovskis, "The Female School Teacher in Ante-bellum Massachusetts," Journal of Social History 10 (Spring 1973): 337-338.

That Brighton's teachers sought professional training is evident in the following description of their 1860-61 activities:

They have manifested at all times, entire readiness in adopting and carrying out the suggestions and wishes of the Board (State Board of Education). The stated meetings of the teachers for mutual conference and improvement mentioned in the last Report, have been held throughout the year; and many valuable hints and encouragements afforded thereby. Our teachers have been present, likewise, at the Middlesex County Teachers' Association, and it is understood that the sixteenth semi-annual meeting of this association will be held in this town in April next. They have been represented at other public meetings for the discussion of questions concerning the interests of education, and the improvement of public schools. They have attended the lectures of Professor Agassiz, at the neighboring University [Harvard], given, through the munificence of the State, to her public school teachers, at the Museum of Comparative Zoology.<sup>42</sup>

The most striking feature of the school reform effort in Brighton, as previously noted, was an almost total absence of conflict, reflecting a general commitment to the goals of the common school program. If opposition existed it was too weak to assume organized form. Strong support for school improvements existed across class lines. An analysis of two petitions, both dating from 1845, asking for the establishment of new school districts in the northeastern and southwestern areas of Brighton, evidences this wide cross-section of concern and involvement. The petitions contained a total of thirty-two signatures, twenty-three of which could be identified. The signers included four market gardeners, four slaughterhouse proprietors or butchers, a merchant, a physician, a bank cashier, a wharf-owner, two cattle dealers, an auctioneer, a

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<sup>42</sup> Brighton, Annual Report of the School Committee for 1860-61, 12.

stable keeper, a harnessmaker, two house painters, a blacksmith, a shoemaker, and a laborer.<sup>43</sup>

The impetus for school reform in Brighton was grounded in a growing sense of anxiety about the future of American society. In early 1855 the School Committee identified the reform movement's goals as the promotion of "the progress of morality, the stability of society, the security of the body politic, [and] the interests of property."<sup>44</sup> Educational reformers sought to buttress republican institutions, property rights, and public order. Brighton's reformers worried that the new industrial order, which was fostering rootlessness and transforming workers from independent farmers and artisans into dependent wage laborers, contained a potential for class-based revolution. They worried also about the impact that Irish-Catholic immigration was having on the dominant Protestant culture. The influx of Irish immigrants, stemming from the potato famine, had a profound social and demographic impact on Brighton. In 1840 a mere 7 percent of the town's population was of Irish Catholic stock. By 1855, the Irish comprised 37 percent of the town's population, and an even higher percentage of its work force.<sup>45</sup> The presence of this sizeable alien element contributed to the anxiety Brighton's leaders were feeling.

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<sup>43</sup> Boston Public Library, Rare Books and Manuscript Department, Brighton Town Records: Box 3, 29 January 1845 and n.d. October 1845; Massachusetts Census, 1855, Brighton; David T. Packard, The Brighton Evangelical Congregational Church: Historical Items, July 1867, Brighton-Allston Historical Society Archives; Adams, Almanac for 1849-50, 92-94.

<sup>44</sup> Brighton Town Records, Vol. 3: 468.

<sup>45</sup> The 37 percent figure includes not only those of Irish birth, but their American-born children. U. S. Census, 1840, Brighton; Massachusetts Census, 1855, Brighton.

One way to blunt ethnic tensions and class-consciousness, the reformers believed, was by exposing children to a common educational experience. The market town's educational leaders subscribed to this ideology in all of its vigor. The School Committee noted in 1841:

Engender a spirit of envy and hatred in the mind of a child of a poor parent against another of a rich parent, and a long life will hardly extinguish it.... If the uneducated and the immoral predominate, the latter will seek among their own number for some master spirit as a leader, whose views of government and society will harmonize with theirs, while the remembrance of past degradation will have rendered them callous to feelings of justice and will stimulate them to acts of revenge.

Society could be saved from such an eventuality, the report continued, only if the upper classes took a timely initiative.

The learned, the wealthy, the refined and the virtuous, must elevate the illiterate, the indigent, the vulgar and the vicious, or the latter will drag society down to a common level with themselves.<sup>46</sup>

The Brighton School Committee balanced off this harsh view of class relations by suggesting that the American economy and social structure was at base highly dynamic and that a class differentiated type of education was therefore unservicable: "And who will attempt to predict the station in life which any child may occupy in the coming generation? Property is subject to constant fluctuations; the rich man of today is often the poor man of tomorrow." Brighton's school reformers wished to keep the sons of rich men from developing aristocratic values. "The rich man's son may learn, before it is too late, that he is to be trained up for those active scenes of life, where the most energetic, the

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<sup>46</sup> Brighton, Annual Report of the School Committee for 1840-41, 7.

most industrious, and the most deserving will take the lead," the committee asserted.<sup>47</sup>

Other factors contributed to the wide support the common school movement received in Brighton. In 1855, some 57 percent of Brighton's households contained school-aged children (ages 5 to 16), while another 10 percent contained children of pre-school age. Thus most families in the town stood to benefit from the school reform program.<sup>48</sup>

The School Committee also touted educational reform as a way of attracting middle and upper-class residents to the town, of fostering quality residential development in Brighton, a message the town's business leadership found less than compelling. In 1848, the School Committee made reference to the large number of Bostonians leaving the city for outlying towns.

More and more these questions are asked by such as the crowded metropolis is yearly sending out into the adjacent towns. 'Where shall we find the best schools?' "Is there in your town a public classical high school at which our boys may be prepared for college, should we so desire?" "Can you offer us equal advantage for the public education, both of our boys and girls, with your neighbors of Cambridge, Roxbury, and Brookline?" If not, we shall perhaps be determined by this consideration alone, to settle with them.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Brighton, Annual Report of the School Committee Report for 1840-41 (Cambridge, 1841) 10; Brighton, Annual Report of the School Committee Report for 1841-42 (Cambridge, 1842) 8.

<sup>48</sup> Massachusetts Census, 1855, Brighton.

<sup>49</sup> Brighton, Annual Report of the School Committee for 1848-49 (Cambridge, 1849) 4.

Long before 1865, with respect to its schools at least, the Town of Brighton was able to answer all of these questions in the affirmative. Whatever other obstacles lay in the path of suburbanization (and there were many), Brighton's schools were not among them.<sup>50</sup>

Brighton also expended substantial sums, comparatively speaking, on fire protection in the 1841 to 1865 period. In making these expenditures the market town was responding to a new and expanded definition of the public interest

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<sup>50</sup> Brighton's growing commitment to public education was reflected also in the liberal support it gave the lyceum movement and the interest many of its citizens showed in the establishment of a public library, a movement that culminated in the founding of the Holton Library in 1864 (to be discussed in detail in Chapter 4). The American Lyceum was launched in 1826. Its purpose was to promote general education in every way by stimulating the study and discussion of worthwhile subjects. The movement was strongest in New England, especially in the the larger towns. By 1839 there were 139 local lyceums in Massachusetts alone, with a total average attendance of thirty-three thousand. These gatherings presented lectures by itinerant scholars on a wide range of topics and contributed significantly to raising the level of public discourse in New England. Though privately funded (supported by contributions), the Brighton Lyceum was intimately related to the common school movement. This is obvious from the composition of its eleven member Board of Directors. In 1849, the President of the Brighton Lyceum was John Ruggles, the Headmaster of Brighton High School, and its Vice President was Joseph Breck, School Committee member. Other members included Frederick A. Whitney and Arthur Swazey, Brighton's two ministers, who also served on the School Committee, and Solomon A. Poor, the Principal of the Harvard Grammar School. Brighton's students often attended the lyceum lectures with their teachers. In 1843 the Brighton School Committee noted that the "public Lyceum...has been sustained the last two winters, by individual contribution, in which all the Lectures have been free to every inhabitant of the town." Some sixty such free lectures were presented to the townspeople in the 1849 to 1854 period alone. Alice Felt Tyler, Freedom's Ferment: Phases of American Social History from the Colonial Period to the Outbreak of the Civil War (New York: Harper & Row, 1944) 262-264; Carl Bode, The Lyceum Movement: Town Meeting of the Mind (Carbondale; Southern Illinois University Press, 1956) 43-45; Brighton, Report of the School Committee for 1843 (Cambridge: 1843) 6; Brighton, Reports of the School Committee for 1849-54.

which saw municipalities generally exercising more authority in the name of the general welfare. There was, of course, great danger of fire in Brighton, a commercial town dotted with slaughter houses, rendering plants, wharves and lumber yards.

Volunteer fire companies had existed in Brighton since colonial times. The traditional basis of organization involved the town providing the equipment, facilities, and a measure of compensation, while the able-bodied men furnished their labor on a voluntary basis. The members consisted mostly of young men who joined as a means of gaining a foothold in the community.<sup>51</sup> Volunteer fire companies were relatively unreliable and inefficient organizations with a strong competitive spirit. In Pittsburgh, to cite an extreme example, as historian Francis Couvares has noted, the intense rivalries among volunteer fire companies sometimes led to physical violence:

With knives, guns and axes firemen assaulted and even murdered one another. On a number of occasions volunteers even set fires in order to lure their rivals into an ambush. Moreover, violence between companies did not require the occurrence of a fire. Fights erupted in outside firehouses and saloons and at Fourth of July picnics.<sup>52</sup>

Though Brighton's fire companies never resorted to Pittsburgh-style behavior, there can be little question that their competitive spirit diminished their efficiency.

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<sup>51</sup>Binford, 70-71.

<sup>52</sup> Francis G. Couvares, The Remaking of Pittsburgh, Class and Culture in an Industrializing City, 1877-1919 (Albany: The State University of New York Press: 1984) 46.

Before 1841, Brighton's fire fighting apparatus had consisted of just one small hand engine, drawn and manned by volunteers. Water to operate the engine was drawn from any available source---pond, stream or well. This hand tub, known as Brighton No.1, was kept in the engine room in the old town hall. Not since 1833, when the town purchased a new engine and outfitted the east room of the town hall to house it, did Brighton take any steps to upgrade its fire fighting apparatus. The intervening years had of course witnessed a dramatic expansion of the town's commercial and industrial base.<sup>53</sup>

Major investment in improved fire fighting equipment and facilities came in three widely separated periods: 1841 to 1842, 1852 to 1854, and 1863 to 1865. The measures undertaken in 1841-42 included the establishment of a second fire company at Brighton Corners. The town equipped this new company, which took the name Charles River No. 2, with the most advanced fire fighting apparatus then available---a W. C. Hunneman & Company hand tub and hose---and a new engine house, at a total cost of \$1,626. A forty member volunteer fire company was organized to handle the new equipment. According to a contemporary, "all of these men were closely identified with the social and business life of the town."<sup>54</sup> The 1841-42 expenditure for fire fighting represented 13.2 percent of the town's budget, the highest percentage spent on the fire department in any year before 1865.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Brighton Town Records, vol 2: 160.

<sup>54</sup> "Old Brighton Firemen," Brighton Item, 11 August 1906: 6.

<sup>55</sup> Brighton, Annual Report of the Receipts and Expenditures for 1841-42, 8-10.

A second period of heavy investment in fire fighting equipment came in the 1852 to 1854 period. That these improvements were made in the aftermath of a rash of destructive fires is consistent with what historian Alan Marcus has described as "the ad hoc, crisis-oriented approach to early nineteenth century municipal problems."<sup>56</sup> In 1852 the town replaced the old Brighton Center hand pump with a Hunneman & Company engine, which it named "Butcher Boy," and in 1853 built a new engine house directly behind the town hall.

Sustaining public interest in volunteer companies proved somewhat difficult. According to Granville A. Fuller, who was long associated with the Brighton Fire Department, "during the latter part of the fifties there was no permanent organization connected with Charles River No. 2, the tub being manned by volunteers when occasion called."<sup>57</sup> In 1860 a committee of the town, established to report on the condition of the fire department, noted that Engine Company No. 1 had been disbanded as well, "leaving the town with two good engines without any organized force to use them."<sup>58</sup> Then, on April 1, 1860, disaster struck when a major fire consumed the Fuller lumber yard and wharf, two stores, a factory and the old Waverly estate at Brighton Corners, some \$17,000 of property. Now "the call became insistent for a reorganization" of

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<sup>56</sup> Alan I. Marcus, Plague of Strangers: Social Groups and the Origins of City Services in Cincinnati, 1819-1870 (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1991) 7; Brighton, Annual Report of the Receipts and Expenditures for 1850-51 (Boston, 1851) 6; Brighton, Annual Report of the Receipts and Expenditures for 1852-53 (Cambridge, 1853) 7.

<sup>57</sup> The Item, 11 August 1906: 6.

<sup>58</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 10, [n.d.] 1860.

Charles River No. 2, noted Fuller, and the company was reorganized under his leadership in late 1860.<sup>59</sup>

The new Charles River No. 2 consisted of forty-six members, whose average age was thirty-one. Of the twenty-eight with determinable occupations, the largest aggregate were butchers (seven), followed by carpenters and market gardeners (three apiece), farmers, wheelwrights and laborers (two apiece), a lumber yard proprietor, a trader, a wheelwright, a blacksmith, a harnessmaker, a tailor, a grocer, a restaurant proprietor and an innkeeper. In short, Charles River No. 2 comprised a youthful cross-section of Brighton's newest commercial crossroads.<sup>60</sup>

Then, on August 12, 1860 a second major fire consumed four structures at the intersection of Washington Street and Chestnut Hill Avenue, in the town's other commercial district, Brighton Center. The 1860-61 Fire Department report claimed that the "extraordinary exertions" of the firemen saved "a large portion of the village from destruction." In all, the town sustained property damage totalling \$47,175 in 1860-61, a loss "much greater than ever before in one year."<sup>61</sup>

These fires helped generate a third period of high expenditure on fire protection between 1860 and 1862, much of it going toward the repair of equipment and buildings and the construction of additional reservoirs. In 1861 an agreement was made with the Cattle Fair Hotel Corporation whereby, in exchange for the town allowing the hotel to lay pipes through the streets from a

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<sup>59</sup> The Item, 11 August 1906: 6.

<sup>60</sup> The Item, 11 August 1906: 6.

<sup>61</sup> Brighton, Treasurer's Report of the Receipts and Expenditures for 1860-61 (Cambridge, 1861) 24-25.

pond to its grounds in Brighton Center, the corporation guaranteed a constant supply of water for the Brighton Center reservoirs.<sup>62</sup>

The manpower drain of the Civil War years (approximately one fifth of all Brighton males ages eighteen to thirty-five saw service) curtailed the town's volunteer fire fighting capacity. By early 1862, the Brighton Center volunteer fire company had once again disbanded. It was reorganized on September 1, 1862 as the Butcher Boy Engine Company, but with a smaller contingent.

Any male resident over the age of eighteen was eligible to join the Butcher Boy Company upon the nomination of the company's "Investigating Committee," providing two-thirds of the regular membership concurred. "On an alarm each member shall repair to the engine," the by-laws provided, "assist in working her, obey all orders of the foreman or senior officer present, and no member shall leave the engine and company when assembled without leave of the commanding officer." "Working" the engine involved pulling it to a fire, for engines were not yet horse-drawn. Members were also required to attend monthly meetings at the engine house. Absence from fires entailed a fine of 50 cents, while absence from the company's monthly meetings resulted in a 25 cent fine. Failure to pay these fines could result in the loss of a member's share of the quarterly payment the company received from the town. In 1863, for example, the town paid the two volunteer fire companies \$700 in compensation.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Brighton, Treasurer's Report of Receipts and Expenditures for 1860-61, 25.

<sup>63</sup> Butcher Boy Engine Company, By-Laws and Minutes of Meetings, 1 September 1862-7 May 1866: 1-7.

The officers of the Butcher Boy Fire Company were elected by its members. The Foreman, J. L. L. Pratt, was thirty-one years of age in 1862. It was a relatively small company, comprising just twenty-eight members. Most were in their teens and early twenties, with about a third over thirty years of age. The company was fairly representative of the town's adult male population, with one notable exception---an absence of Irish Catholics.<sup>64</sup>

The first major fire that the new company was obliged to fight broke out on Sunday, December 7, 1862.

As an alarm was given at 3 p.m. [the company's minute book reads], which proved to be the burning of the Catholic church on Bennett Street, the company was promptly on hand, but owing to the scarcity of water in the vicinity of the church it was entirely consumed. Engine No. 1 and 2 of this town and No. 1 of Brookline were present. After the fire the company partook of refreshments furnished by the Catholic Society.

This conflagration destroyed the original St. Columba's Roman Catholic Church, an 1855 wooden structure that stood about a quarter of a mile north of Brighton Center. According to Reverend Whitney, the fire was accidental, and "the Society immediately rebuilt on the same site, and again in wood."<sup>65</sup>

The Brighton engine companies, as previously noted, maintained a lively competitiveness. According to Granville A. Fuller,

There was great rivalry between the Charles River No. 2 and the Butcher Boy and at every fire an effort was made by each company to either flood its opponents, or pump it dry. Nor did these companies confine their attention to fires only in their district, for whenever a blaze could be seen, off would roll the companies.... Perhaps the repast that always awaited them upon

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<sup>64</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 11, 11 November 1862.

<sup>65</sup> Butcher Boy Engine Company, By-Laws and Minutes: 15; Whitney, 289.

their return from a fire would account in some measure for their zeal in responding to fires, for it was the custom of the inhabitants to repair to the houses during the absence of the companies and prepare a bountiful collation of which all partook upon their return. That it was not all play, however, may be learned from the fact that at one time soon after [Charles River No. 2] was organized in 1860, it turned out to four working fires in 21 hours.<sup>66</sup>

The Butcher Boy volunteer fire company did engage in some fairly heavy drinking, however. While its by-laws forbade drinking at the engine house or during a fire, the company's members expected to drink after fires, and their officers seemed to have shared and supported that expectation. When the company put out a fire at Horace Baxter's slaughterhouse in August 1863, for example, the appreciative owner treated the men to liquid refreshments and, as the engine company journal noted, "after giving three cheers...for him, we were ordered home, where we all went in good spirits."<sup>67</sup> (emphasis in original)

In May 1864 Brighton took a major step toward the professionalization of its fire department by establishing a Board of Engineers with overall responsibility for fire fighting. The board consisted of leading citizens Granville A. Fuller, George H. Peck and Benjamin F. Ricker. By January 1865 Brighton's Fire Department had "become so systemized," a town report noted, "that much good may result from it."<sup>68</sup>

Brighton also expanded governmental services by furnishing a relatively generous measure of poor relief and by establishing a rather elaborate town cemetery. Both measures were enthusiastically supported by local

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<sup>66</sup> The Item, 11 August 1906: 4.

<sup>67</sup> Butcher Boy Engine Company, By-Laws and Minutes: 24-25.

<sup>68</sup> Brighton, Auditor's Report for the Year 1864-65 (Boston, 1865) 6.

businessmen. While the town's expenditure on poor relief never exceeded 9 percent of its budget in any year from 1840 to 1873, this level of support was generous by comparison with Brookline. Brighton's construction of a new Poor House in 1861, at a cost of \$2,265, is especially notable given the small number of patrons the almshouse was accomodating at the time.

The term "the poor" covered a wide range of conditions: physical disability, old age, widows, orphans, even those suffering from mental illness. The proper setting for dispensing aid to poor persons, it was believed, was a household, preferably that of the needy person's own family, or if he or she was without relatives, that of a neighbor, with local government furnishing financial support to the sponsoring family.

It is no coincidence that the widespread establishment of poor houses and other custodial asylums---prisons, reformatories, workhouses, and hospitals for the insane---coincided with the beginning of the commercial and industrial revolutions. Reliance on community households, while adequate in a relatively stable, agrarian society in which needy persons were both few in number and mostly long-term residents, was impossible in a context of increasing geographical mobility and mounting economic insecurity.<sup>69</sup>

Brighton established its Poor House at a relatively early date, on May 11, 1818, when it purchased of Thomas Park, a major landowner, a farmhouse and seven acres located in the remote southwestern corner of the town, for the substantial sum of \$1,435. Since the entire town budget in 1818 amounted to

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<sup>69</sup> David J. Rothman, The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971) 3-5; Robert A. McCaughley, Josiah Quincy, 1772-1864: The Last Federalist (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974) 93-94.

only \$2,000, the town was obliged to borrow from wealthy resident Jonathan Livermore to make the purchase.<sup>70</sup>

The new philosophy of poor relief was best exemplified in the 1833 Quincy Report to the Massachusetts State Legislature's Committee on Pauper Affairs. This report urged all Massachusetts towns to establish almshouses to teach the poor "order, regularity, industry and temperance." Its author, former Boston Mayor Josiah Quincy, charged that of the various methods of assisting the poor, "the most wasteful, the most expensive, and most injurious to their morals, and destructive to their industrious habits, is that of supply in their own families." Outdoor relief, as such assistance was called, had the effect, contended a New York state report on the same subject, of "encouraging the sturdy beggar and profligate vagrant to become pensioners upon the public funds."<sup>71</sup>

A major aim of the opponents of outdoor relief was to discourage applications for public assistance. As Michael Katz has written, "In essence, the social policy advocated shutting up the old and sick away from their friends and relatives to deter the working class from seeking poor relief. In this way, fear of the poor house became the key to sustaining the work ethic in nineteenth century America."<sup>72</sup>

An analysis of town reports for the period 1840 to 1873 shows that older and newer views of poor relief coincided in Brighton. In a typical year 50 to 60 percent of the town's poor relief was dispensed at the almshouse, the remainder

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<sup>70</sup> Brighton Town Records, vol. 1: 257.

<sup>71</sup>Michael B. Katz, In The Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1986) 16-21.

<sup>72</sup> Katz, In the Shadow of the Poorhouse, 25.

going to outdoor relief or to the support of Brighton's poor residing in other towns or in state institutions.

Brighton provided outdoor relief for two reasons: it was cheaper than institutionalization, and it was in the interest of the local merchants who furnished the goods and services the town dispensed. Substantial sums were involved. In 1869, for example, Brighton purchased \$2,600 worth of food and supplies, medical attendance, rental support, and burial services for the town's poor. Local merchants, doctors, and undertakers provided most of these goods and services. Eleven merchants and four physicians received payments in 1869. One of these, Washington C. Allen, owner of a Brighton Center general store, alone furnished nearly a thousand dollars in goods. Brighton's merchants, a class that wielded considerable influence in the town's affairs, thus had a vested interest in perpetuating outdoor relief.<sup>73</sup>

The number of persons residing at the Brighton Poor House varied greatly over the years. The 1840 to 1853 period witnessed a major depression (1837 to 1841) followed by the Irish potato famine immigration (most intense between 1846 and 1853). Demands for assistance subsided in the late 1850s. In 1846 there were a total of sixteen inmates in the almshouse. By 1855, there were just five: four elderly men, ages eighty-seven, eighty-three and sixty-three, one elderly woman, age sixty-three, and an insane woman, age thirty-seven. In 1870, the Poor House contained only three inmates: two young laborers, age twenty-two and twenty-five (who were almost certainly part of the workforce then constructing the Chestnut Hill Reservoir), and the same insane woman referred

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<sup>73</sup> Brighton, Official Reports for 1869-70 (Boston, 1870) 15-17.

to above. Thus from the late 1850s on relatively few people were served by the Brighton Poor House.<sup>74</sup>

For reasons not entirely clear, Brighton undertook major improvements in its Poor Farm in 1861 by constructing a new almshouse and by adding seven additional acres at a cost of nearly \$3,000. "The building is so old and dilapidated as to render any attempt to repair it futile," noted the report of the Overseers of the Poor in recommending construction of the new edifice. The 1861 report, the most complete record of poor relief expenditure up to that time, indicated that outdoor relief had been given to only two families in 1861, but that another 255 "transient callers" had been furnished with food and lodgings in the town lockup. The 1862 report described the new almshouse as "two stories high, with two Ls, each fifteen feet by eighteen. It will accomodate, it is believed, from fifteen to twenty permanent occupants, besides the family of the keeper of the house. The number of paupers now in it is three."<sup>75</sup>

The town records for the period provide no information relative to who benefitted from the construction and outfitting of the new almshouse or the purchase of additional acreage for the poor farm. The proposal to expand and modernize the facility was first made at a March 11, 1861 town meeting. It was immediately referred to the Selectmen (a body that included Granville Fuller,

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<sup>74</sup> Thomas H. O'Connor, Lords of the Loom: The Cotton Whigs and the Coming of the Civil War (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968) 38; U.S. Census, 1845, Brighton; Massachusetts Census, 1855, Brighton; U.S. Census, 1870, Population Schedule, Brighton.

<sup>75</sup> Brighton, Annual Reports of the Town of Brighton for 1861-62 (Cambridge, 1862) 8 and 22; Brighton, Treasurer's Report of the Receipts and Expenditures for 1860-61 (Cambridge, 1861) 23.

lumber dealer and architect) "with instructions that they report the most feasible plan for the support and accomodation of the Poor." On April 22, 1861, the Selectmen recommended the construction of a new building and the purchase by the town of seven additional acres, previously leased. The land was available for \$800, the report noted. Neither the town meeting records nor the relevant annual reports identify the contractor (the fact that Fuller prepared the plans for the edifice suggests that he might have been the contractor) or the owner of the seven acre parcel the committee recommended the town purchase. Nor does the report explain convincingly why Brighton undertook an expansion of its almshouse at a time when it contained only two inhabitants. It merely stated: "Your committee have come to this conclusion by information obtained from towns near us that have no alms house," adding that the delapidated existing buildings would not last through another winter, and that this might be the last opportunity to buy the seven acre parcel "at a very low price."<sup>76</sup> The year 1865 marked a turning point in the operation of the refurbished Brighton Poor Farm. Instead of renting the property as in past years, the Selectmen placed it under the jurisdiction of the town's Overseer of Highways, John R. Black. It was also used as a detention center for truant boys, the young men being put to work on its fields and on the town's heavily traveled roads.<sup>77</sup> Under Black's management the Brighton Poor Farm was greatly improved. The 1866 report described it as "well kept up."

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<sup>76</sup> Brighton Town Records, vol. 4: 114, 120 and 123.

<sup>77</sup> Brighton, Annual Reports of the Town of Brighton for 1865-66 (Boston, 1866) 8.

The stones have been picked up and removed from the grassland, thereby causing it to yield a much larger quantity of hay than it otherwise would. The meadow-mud dug out of the pond was made into compost, and afterwards spread upon the land under cultivation, enriching it much, and increasing the product of the root crops twofold. Improvements have been made on the walls and fences, but the time required for work on highways has prevented a great deal of work from being done which otherwise would have been."<sup>78</sup>

By 1869, the Brighton Poor Farm was generating \$422.38 of produce a year. It is perhaps no coincidence that these improvements came during the period of horticulturalist Charles H. B. Breck's service as an overseer of the poor. The same 1869 report described the inhabitants of the Brighton Poor House as "well cared for, having plenty of everything good to eat, and decent clothing to wear."<sup>79</sup>

The establishment in Brighton in 1850 of a rural style cemetery would seem to have been related to the existence of so many important horticultural establishments in the town. By contrast with the simple church burial grounds of earlier times, rural cemeteries were laid out by landscape architects for beauty and picturesqueness, their winding avenues and paths accentuating the natural terrain. The prototype in the United States was Cambridge's Mt. Auburn Cemetery, established in 1831 by the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. Mt. Auburn served not only as a place of internment, but as one landscape historian has noted, "as a quiet place in which to escape the bustle and clangor of the city--for strolling, for solitude, and even for family picnics."<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Brighton, Auditor's Report for 1866-67 (Boston, 1867) 37-39.

<sup>79</sup> Brighton, Official Reports for 1869-70 (Boston, 1870) 59.

<sup>80</sup> Norman T. Newton, Design on the Land: The Development of Landscape Architecture (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971) 268;

Brighton had long since outgrown its old burial ground, situated on a cramped half-acre behind the First Church, at the center of town and opposite the busy Cattle Market. The proposal to establish a new cemetery, which was first presented to the town on March 16, 1846, won immediate approval. Three prominent citizens, Henry H. Learnard, Edward Sparhawk and Samuel Brooks were assigned the task of finding a suitable location. Not until June 1848, however, more than two years later, did the committee present its recommendations. Enlarging the existing burial ground through the purchase of a half acre of adjacent land was one possible solution to the space problem, the committee reported. Stephen Hastings Bennett, the town's leading cattle dealer and largest taxpayer, owned this land, but he wanted ten cents a square foot (about \$2,000) for the property. Cheaper and larger parcels were available, the committee noted, in less central locations at prices ranging from \$400 to \$1,000 per acre. After some discussion, the town authorized the committee to purchase whichever site it deemed most suitable.<sup>81</sup>

On November 20, 1848 the committee notified the town that it had purchased "Aspinwall Woods," a fourteen acre property on South Street (now Commonwealth Avenue) for \$4,000, or less than \$300 an acre. The town approved this purchase, and hired William A. Mason, a Cambridge civil engineer, to survey the land. Mason submitted his survey on January 6, 1849. An eight

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Blanche Linden-Ward, Silent City on a Hill: Landscapes of Memory and Boston's Mount Auburn Cemetery (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989) 215-217.

<sup>81</sup>Brighton Town Records, vol. 3: 16 and 187; Frederick A. Whitney, An Address Delivered at the Consecration of Evergreen Cemetery, Brighton, August 7, 1850 (Boston, 1850) 21.

member Cemetery Committee was then instituted to prepare the grounds. In addition to the three Selectmen this body included two prominent horticulturalists, Edward Chamberlin, business partner of Joseph Breck, and Francis L. Winship, one of the owners of Winship's Gardens. These men played a major role in developing this splendid rural cemetery.<sup>82</sup>

Evergreen Cemetery was formally dedicated on August 7, 1850. In his dedicatory address, Reverend Frederick A. Whitney, Minister of the First Church, identified the other Massachusetts cities and towns with rural cemeteries as Cambridge, Roxbury, Springfield, Worcester, Lowell, Plymouth, Framingham, and Chelsea.<sup>83</sup> Every one of these communities, it should be noted, was larger than Brighton. Why did Brighton establish such a facility? Brighton was the home of four major horticultural businesses. The establishment of a rural cemetery enhanced the prestige of that key local industry while providing the residents with a splendid visual amenity emblematic of Brighton's growing prosperity.

While quick to expand governmental services in areas helpful to the town's commercial interests, Brighton showed itself extremely hesitant to adopt measures that seemed to even remotely threaten the interests of its cattle, slaughtering, and related nuisance industries. This is nowhere more evident than in the realm of public health.

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<sup>82</sup> Whitney, An Address Delivered at the Consecration of Evergreen Cemetery, 21.

<sup>83</sup> Whitney, An Address Delivered at the Consecration of Evergreen Cemetery, 11.

Massachusetts statutes empowered town governments to exercise controls over slaughtering and waste disposal practices. "An Act for Preventing Common Nuisances," dating from 1785, gave Massachusetts towns authority to "assign some certain places for the exercising of any of the trades or employments of killing creatures for meat...and forbid and restrain the exercise of either of them in other places not so approved and allowed."<sup>84</sup> The state gave its towns still broader authority in 1797 by authorizing them to establish boards of health empowered "to remove all filth of any kind whatever within the limits of the town...whenever such filth shall in their judgment endanger the lives or the health of the inhabitants thereof."<sup>85</sup> The powers this law conferred were rarely invoked, however, the enforcement mechanisms being quite cumbersome. This was where the law respecting offensive trades stood when the issue was first raised.

Not until the mid-1840s, however, did public health become a serious concern in Brighton. In sharp contrast to the school reform initiative, in which the goals of the business community, the general population, and school reformers coincided, the effort to regulate slaughtering and waste disposal practices led to serious conflict, stemming from fundamental disagreements among the town's property owners. The prime movers in the initiative to regulate slaughtering practices acted from highly personal motives (concern for the healthfulness of their own environment and concern to promote property values). Some were Boston commuters, but the majority were not.

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<sup>84</sup> Massachusetts General Court, Acts of 1785, Chapter 1.

<sup>85</sup> Massachusetts General Court, Acts of 1797, Chapter 16; Massachusetts, The Revised Statutes of the Commonwealth, Passed November 6, 1835 (Boston, 1836) 214.

An analysis of the twenty anti-nuisance petitions that were presented to the Brighton Board of Selectmen (acting in the capacity of the town's Board of Health) in the 1845 to 1865 period supports this conclusion. Of the nineteen residents who signed more than one of these petitions, eleven were major landowners. Eight of these eleven signers, moreover, resided in the eastern part of town---in an area ripe for residential development. Significantly, only one of the nineteen signers was connected in any way with the cattle or slaughtering industries.

The first major effort to bring unhealthy slaughtering practices under control came on March 23, 1847, when twelve residents petitioned the town to insert an article in the warrant of the next town meeting "call[ing] the attention of the town...to the condition of the slaughterhouses." The petitioners included six major landowners, Jared Coffin, Jonathan Whitney, Samuel Brooks, Edward Sparhawk, George Livermore and Cephas Brackett, two bankers, Life Baldwin and Daniel Kingsley, and a dry goods dealer, George H. Hitchborn. The identities of three signers could not be established. Of the nine known signers, five had held key town offices during the preceding decade.<sup>86</sup>

The slaughterhouse question was taken up on April 5, 1847 at a turbulent town meeting. The only account of this gathering (possibly the most emotional town meeting in the history of Brighton) is the one that Town Clerk William Warren entered into the town records. After a lengthy debate, Warren's account notes, it was,

Moved and seconded that the question be taken by a division of the house and count. Much confusion ensued and the motion to take the question by

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<sup>86</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 4, 23 March 1847.

ballot was put, but not declared in irregular debate in which some irritable feeling was exhibited attended with indications of disorder, when the question was called in various parts of the house. The house was then divided, tellers appointed and the motion for instructing the Selectmen was declared as decided in the negative as follows: 76 affirmative and 83 negative.<sup>87</sup>

Clearly the petitioners had touched a raw nerve.

On September 29, 1849 Brighton's Selectmen (acting as the Board of Health) handed down a ruling which appeared, on its face, to be a major victory for those wishing to bring the town's nuisance industries under tighter control. It stipulated that in future new slaughterhouses as well as other nuisance industries would be required to locate in a special "offensive industries zone," an area at least twenty rods (330 feet) south of South Street (the portion of Commonwealth Avenue between the Chestnut Hill Reservoir and the Newton boundary).

The Selectmen who established the offensive industries zone were Reuben Hunting, John Gordon, and William Champney. Hunting, a butcher, had presided over the 1847 town meeting that declined to investigate the town's slaughtering practices. Gordon owned a thirty-acre farm near Cambridge Crossing, a neighborhood ripe for development. His name appeared on four of the anti-nuisance petitions of the period. The third selectman, Champney, was the most durable political figure in Brighton. A descendant of Brighton's first settler, the Elder Richard Champney, he owned a small farm at the extreme western end of town and would seem to have had no direct stake in the issue one way or the other. First elected in 1844, Champney was to occupy the post of

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<sup>87</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 4, 5 April 1847.

selectman for the next quarter century, usually outpolling other candidates in town elections. He also served on the Board of Assessors from 1843 to 1872.<sup>88</sup>

The requirement to locate in the offensive industries zone, it must be emphasized, posed no threat to Brighton's fifty or so existing slaughterhouses. While the Selectmen occasionally ordered would-be proprietors into the zone, there is no evidence that any of them ever heeded these directives. An 1866 map of slaughterhouse locations shows no nuisance industries of any kind situated in the designated area seventeen years after its creation.<sup>89</sup> Rather than locate in this remote corner of Brighton, far from the railroad and the main roads to Boston, new proprietors preferred to purchase or rent existing facilities.<sup>90</sup> The creation of an offensive industries zone thus indirectly benefitted slaughterhouse proprietors by increasing the sale or rental value of existing properties.

New complaints against the slaughterhouses emerged in late 1849 when two petitions reached the Board of Selectmen objecting to the slaughtering practices of Jacob F. Taylor and Stephen Hill. Jacob Taylor's slaughterhouse was located on lower Market Street, near Brighton Corners. The petition, signed by seventeen of his neighbors, objected to Taylor's "keeping of a large number of hogs," which emitted foul odors. The town ordered the offensive practices "abated and discontinued." The prohibition had little practical impact, however. By 1860, Taylor's slaughterhouse, which employed eight men, was producing \$122,000 worth of beef, hides and tallow annually. By 1863, he stood eighteenth

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<sup>88</sup> Winship, vol. 1: 42.

<sup>89</sup> H. M. Wightman, Plan of the Town of Brighton, 1866.

<sup>90</sup> Brighton Town Records, vol. 3: 222.

among Brighton's taxpayers. In 1872 he became an incorporator of the Butchers' Slaughtering and Melting Association (the Brighton Abattoir), later serving as its president.<sup>91</sup>

Stephen Hill's slaughtering practices generated much greater opposition. The Hill slaughterhouse was located in Union Square, a point where three major highways converged. Twenty-nine year old Stephen Hill had come to Brighton from Westboro, Maine in 1842 and had been engaged in butchering ever since. In the 1847 to 1849 period, he plied his trade in a barn rented from his next door neighbor, Thomas Wethern, a farmer and butcher, a structure situated about one hundred feet from Wethern's residence. According to Wethern, who initiated the protest, Hill had rented half his barn with the understanding "that no cattle except [Hill's] and for his own trade should be killed therein and that it should be kept clean." But Hill, Wethern charged, had

violated this promise...and has killed other cattle there, and has sometimes kept it so unclean that the blood, feet and heads, tallow and waste have been quite offensive and unhealthy and with the offal and decomposition, and myriads of live creatures bred therein have seriously disturbed the family of your present petitioner, although at a very considerable distance from the place of slaughter.<sup>92</sup>

When Wethern refused to renew his tenant's lease, Hill began fitting out a barn on his own property for slaughtering. This barn occupied an eighty square foot lot and stood less than twenty feet from Cambridge Street, one of the most

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<sup>91</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 3, 12 September 1849; U. S. Census, Industrial Schedule, 1860, Brighton; Brighton, Auditor's Report of the Town of Brighton for 1863-64 (Boston, 1864) 71-88; Winship, vol. 2: 91.

<sup>92</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 3, 9 October 1849.

heavily traveled thoroughfares in the town. In addition, the barn was a scant eight feet from Wethern's house and was situated on higher land so that, Wethern maintained, "the drainage of blood, offal and waste must be directly on the land of this petitioner and utterly ruin the comfort, health, and security of his habitations, and the jar of the falling beasts will be continually heard in the house and felt throughout." Wethern asked the Selectmen to forbid his neighbor from engaging in further slaughtering in Union Square.

The Selectmen ordered Hill to desist, but he chose to ignore the order. At this point Wethern submitted a second petition, containing forty names, which demanded that the town proceed against Hill with all of the power at its disposal.

Now this petitioner asks if this is right? If it is proper on a piece of land about 80 feet sqr. at the corner of two large public streets to have a dwelling house and outbuildings---a slaughterhouse and establishment where perhaps 30 head of cattle may be penned, knocked down and slaughtered, by day and by night, and all the affluvia thereof sent free to your petitioner and the public? Is it right that all the heads and feet, waste, tallow & trimmings & meat should be continually carried out immediately under the parlor windows and in front of the [petitioner's] premises? And is there no law to prevent it?

Citing an 1831 Massachusetts Superior Court decision, Baker v. Boston, Wethern claimed that the town was required "to watch over the health of the citizens and to remove every nuisance so far as they may be able, which may endanger it."<sup>93</sup>

Hill was equally determined, however, to continue slaughtering at the Union Square site and was able to organize extensive entrepreneurial support for his position. His rejoinder, supported by a petition containing 131 signatures, accused Wethern of misrepresentations.

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<sup>93</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 3, 9 October 1849.

[Hill] has constructed said house on the most approved plan and according to the best principles; ...he has contracted with a man to remove daily from it all the offal and other feculent matter, and made other arrangements connected therewith so that he believes and trusts that the business as it will there be exercised and carried on by him will not prove offensive to the inhabitants or injurious to the public health.

Hill also contended that the Board of Selectmen lacked the authority to order the closing of his slaughterhouse, insisting that the state law under which the town had taken action (the 21st chapter, 47th section of the Revised Statutes of the Commonwealth) did not apply to slaughter houses at all; that it was designed to "operate equally and generally upon all inhabitants" rather than against individuals; and that his slaughterhouse was "not located in the midst of a populated community." Finally, and most importantly for our purposes, Hill maintained that the townspeople of Brighton did not regard his slaughterhouse to be offensive.<sup>94</sup> (emphasis mine)

Hill succeeded in enlisting broad support. The residents who signed his petition stated that they did not believe "that the trade of butcher as exercised by Stephen Hill will prove dangerous to the public health or offensive to the inhabitants" and asked that "he be allowed to exercise his trade of butcher in the house erected by him on his premises...and thereby enjoy the rights of said trade with the other butchers...of Brighton." The signers of this petition, most of whom were directly or indirectly connected with the cattle and slaughtering trades,

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<sup>94</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 3, 29 September and 9 October 1849.

viewed the Selectmen's order as a potential threat to the great industry upon which their livelihood and prosperity depended.<sup>95</sup>

An analysis of the Wethern and Hill petitions furnishes insights into the politics of the public health issue in Brighton at mid-century. The Wethern petition contained a total of forty signatures. Few of its signers had anything to do with the cattle and slaughtering industries. Only four were butchers, all small scale operators. Most of the signers (the occupations of thirty-three were determinable) were market gardeners (a total of ten), merchants (seven), or representatives of various building trades (five).

Hill's petition, by contrast, drew its strongest support from the cattle and slaughtering industries. Of the ninety-seven signers whose occupations could be established, forty-four were directly involved in the industry, including the owners of twenty-three of the slaughterhouses and virtually all of the larger-scale proprietors.

What these two petitions demonstrate is the extent to which this issue divided Brighton. By 1849 the ten principal taxpayers (based on the 1854 valuation list) had already taken a position on the public health issue, with five favoring tighter regulation and five opposing it.

### **Public Health Position of Brighton's Top Taxpayers<sup>96</sup>**

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<sup>95</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 3, 29 September 1849.

<sup>96</sup> Brighton, Annual Report of the Receipts and Expenditures for 1854-55 (Cambridge, 1855) 17-39.

NAME	OCCUPATION	TAX	REGULATION
1. Stephen H. Bennett	Cattle Dealer	\$603	Anti
2. Jared Coffin	Gentleman	436	Pro
3. William G. Wilson	Hotel Keeper	339	Anti
4. James Holton	Farmer	302	Anti
5. David Morrison	Farmer	274	Pro
6. Jonathan Whitney	Gentleman	258	Pro
7. Cephas Brackett	Gentleman	223	Pro
8. James Dana	Butcher	223	Anti
9. George H. Brooks	Farmer	202	Pro
10. John W. Hollis	Butcher	197	Anti

While available records fail to reveal the outcome of the Wethern-Hill struggle, it seems clear that Hill was not forced out of business or even compelled to relocate in the offensive industries zone off of South Street. On the contrary, by 1860 he was operating the second largest slaughterhouse in Brighton, a facility capitalized at \$40,000, employing eight men, and situated adjacent to his residence on the west side of North Harvard Street, in an area which had considerable residential development potential by virtue of its proximity to major thoroughfares and a horse-car line.<sup>97</sup>

The town continued to be troubled by public health controversies in the 1850s. In December 1851 the Board of Selectmen was asked to forbid Stephen Brooks, a twenty-nine year old butcher from New Braintree, Massachusetts, from establishing a slaughter house on Rockland Street (now Chestnut Hill Avenue) on a parcel of land a quarter of a mile from Brighton Center.<sup>98</sup> The petitioners, eleven neighboring landowners, were concerned to protect the development potential of the area.

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<sup>97</sup> U. S. Census, Industrial Schedule, 1860, Brighton; Winship, vol. 2: 172.

<sup>98</sup> Winship, vol. 2: 100.

Believing that such a building will lessen the value of real estate in the vicinity thereby unjustly reducing the value of our property [and] believing that the recent construction of a new road and the probable construction of a Rail Road Depot near said lands will soon render them available and desirable for occupation as genteel residences---we respectfully request your honorable body...to assign such a place to the said Stephen Brooks for the erection of said building as will relieve your petitioners from the annoyance and danger to public health arising from the exercise of offensive trades and employments.<sup>99</sup>

The new road referred to in the petition was Beacon Street. The depot alluded to was probably one that the Charles River railroad, then under construction, was expected to build at the point where its tracks would cross Chestnut Hill Avenue (the future Reservoir Station).

While the Selectmen forbade Brooks from operating his slaughtering business on Rockland Street, and ordered him into the offensive industries zone, there is again no evidence of compliance. By 1866 Brooks was operating a major slaughterhouse less than a half mile south of the site he had been forbidden to use in 1851, a facility that Dr. Henry Clark of Boston, an expert on epidemic diseases, described as contaminating Brighton's streams and ponds.<sup>100</sup>

A site on the eastern side of Cambridge Street, just below Cambridge Crossing, became the focus of concern in the mid-1850s as three successive attempts were made to introduce large-scale nuisance industries to the location. Neighboring landowners successfully opposed these initiatives, however. Their

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<sup>99</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 4, 30 December 1851.

<sup>100</sup> Henry G. Clark, Inspection of the Slaughter-Houses of Brighton, April 30, 1866 (Brighton, 1866) 8-9.

success here was almost certainly related to the scale of the contemplated use, as compared to the generally small-size slaughterhouses and other nuisance industries that were typical of Brighton. Moreover, the eastern end of Brighton, linked to Boston by superior transportation facilities, had the greatest potential for residential development in the 1850s. The establishment in 1858 of the Newton Railroad Company, a horse car line that ran "from the Brighton and Cambridgeport Bridge to the west school house [at Oak Square] by way of Cambridge Street and Washington Street" added significantly to that potential.<sup>101</sup>

On September 30, 1854 a petition reached the Selectmen directing their attention to a scheme of Messrs Nicholson, Pope and Nash, non-residents, to establish a brewery at the Cambridge Street site, "on land where it must be unavoidably injurious and offensive to those residing in the neighborhood." The petition asked the Selectmen "to forbid them the exercise of such offensive trade or to assign them some other place if such can be found within the limits of the town." This petition bore the signatures of thirty-four residents, including most of the neighborhood's major landowners, men who controlled about 400 acres of prime real estate.<sup>102</sup>

Francis Standish, local landowner and building contractor, was the chief spokesman for the neighborhood at the October 20, 1854 public hearing on the issue. Counsel for the petitioners described the facility, which had already been built, as unsightly and therefore detrimental to the neighborhood and complained of the "bad odors of barley when fermenting."<sup>103</sup> While the public record does not

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<sup>101</sup>Brighton, Selectmen's Records, vol. 2: 31 May 1858.

<sup>102</sup>Brighton Town Records: Box 4, 30 September 1854.

<sup>103</sup>Brighton Town Records: Box 4: 20 October 1854.

specify what specific action was taken, the fact that the brewery soon after ceased operating suggests that the town took some action to discourage the enterprise.

This site reemerged as a focus of concern in the spring of 1857 when the residents of the area learned that the firm of Nourse, Mason, Sampson & Tappan were planning to establish a commercial fertilizer business in the now vacant brewery complex---"a business of manufacturing the offal of cattle into Poudrette, or under some other name as a manure, on the premises lately occupied as a brewery on the south side of Cambridge Street in the Town of Brighton." They petitioned the Selectmen to "forbid the said business from being carried on, on said place." While this petition bore only ten names, it included most of the major landowners of the eastern part of town. Here appeared for the first time the name of Isaac Pratt, Jr., a wealthy iron manufacturer and Boston commuter, who had recently built an imposing mansion at the northeastern corner of Brighton and Harvard Avenues.<sup>104</sup>

Pratt resembled the elite commuters of Brookline in background. Winship described him as "a large capitalist" and "a very clear-headed businessman." His commercial interests were then situated entirely outside of the town, though he would later acquire much Brighton land. As President of the Weymouth Iron Company, he commuted to offices on Milk Street in Boston, while also serving as President of the Boston-based Atlantic National Bank.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 5, 12 March 1857.

<sup>105</sup> Winship, vol 2: 24-26; Bacon, Men of Progress, 83-84; Brighton, Annual Report of Receipts and Expenditures for 1858-59 (Cambridge, 1859) 38.

In March 1857 Pratt wrote the Selectmen to complain that John Farrington, a local slaughter house proprietor and a member of an old Brighton family, was using a lot adjacent to the B&W's Cambridge Crossing stop to dump offal.

For several days at different times last year [he complained], and for a space of time this year about the 26th of July, in the whole neighborhood in that vicinity the atmosphere has been impregnated with the most deadly and unwholesome smell, and a recurrence of the same is expected as soon as the frost leaves the ground, as the heap is disturbed.

Pratt continued by noting, significantly, "I have been informed that it is of no use to ask the Select Men to abate any nuisance as they will take no notice of any complaint," but continued, "I have thought it proper to lay the subject before them before taking any other course to abate the nuisance."<sup>106</sup> Thus even a wealthy and powerful man like Pratt was dubious about his influence with the Brighton Selectmen when challenging permissive slaughtering and waste disposal practices. There is again no indication in the town record of what action was taken.

The brewery site became a center of controversy yet a third time in January 1858 (the fertilizer factory having apparently not materialized), when residents learned of a plan to lease the property to the firm of Rice, Stearns & Company for the "boiling of heads and feet and what other nuisance the subscribers know not." The target of this protest was a firm headed by an influential local resident, Edmund Rice, Jr, a 42-year old West India goods

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<sup>106</sup> Winship, vol 2: 212-213; Brighton Town Records: Box 5, 12 March 1857.

merchant and local lumber dealer, who had served on the school committee in the 1853 to 1855 period and as state representative in 1854 and 1857. Noting that they had "suffered by nuisances in the same place heretofore" the petitioners asked the Selectmen to "forbid the carrying on of any such business in said place, to the injury of the health and property of the neighborhood, and that you will appoint the said persons a suitable place for the said business, if any can be found in the said town." Nine names appeared on this petition. Of the six whose occupations can be established, four (three farmers and a builder) owned large parcels of land near the proposed rendering plant. The others were Isaac Pratt and James Arkenson, the owner of a Western Avenue ropewalk.<sup>107</sup> On January 23, 1858 the Selectmen denied Rice, Stearns & Company permission to establish itself at the brewery site, noting "we have assigned that part of Brighton, lying south of South Street...for the exercise of all trades offensive to the inhabitants."<sup>108</sup>

The continued unwillingness of Brighton's Selectmen to regulate small scale slaughterhouse operators is reflected in its handling of the last major offensive trade issue to appear before the outbreak of the Civil War. In late 1860 Isaac Pratt and four neighbors petitioned the Selectmen to forbid Walter Wilkins, a young butcher who had recently moved to Brighton from Vermont, from slaughtering cattle on premises previously owned by butcher David Hart near Cambridge Crossing. Wilkins' slaughterhouse employed six men and was producing almost \$81,000 worth of meat, hides, and tallow in 1860. The

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<sup>107</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 6, 8 January 1858.

<sup>108</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 6, 23 January 1858.

Selectmen prohibited further slaughtering at the location, again noting that the "place of assignment" for such activity was the offensive trades zone in the southern part of town. "Feeling aggrieved by such order of prohibition and determination," and believing that the town had overstepped the bounds of its authority in ordering its discontinuance, Wilkins announced that he would appeal the ruling to one of the Justices of the Superior Court, as he was entitled to do under the law. No record exists to indicate that he took such action, however. Wilkins, like earlier butchers, who took the path of passive resistance and continued slaughtering in the same general location, was carrying on his trade there at least as late as 1866.<sup>109</sup>

Thus, after more than two decades of effort by landowners to more effectively regulate slaughtering and waste disposal practices, the public health situation in Brighton in the mid-1860s was not appreciably different from what it had been in 1847, demonstrating that protecting the cattle and slaughtering interests continued to be the central concern of the town's leadership. While in Cambridge, as Binford writes, "residential promoters turned public authority against noxious neighbors" and "petitioning citizens prodded health officials to close down backyard fringe enterprises," Brighton's petitioners, who represented a narrower base, found the town government immovable in its commitment to the perpetuation of fringe zone enterprises.<sup>110</sup>

The same pattern is evident in the realm of law enforcement. As the host community of a crowded weekly cattle fair, Brighton was subjected to more

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<sup>109</sup> U.S. Census, 1860, Industrial Schedule, Brighton; H. M. Wightman, Plan of the Town of Brighton, 1866.

<sup>110</sup> Binford, 222.

noise, congestion, drunkenness, reckless driving, gambling and crime than any of its neighbors. Here again town government was slow to provide effective regulation of activities that clearly inhibited middle and upper class residential development.

Brighton's famous cattle market drew hundreds of strangers and a tangle of traffic into the community on a weekly basis.

Thursday of every week [Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote in October 1840], which by common consent is market day, changes the generally quiet village of Brighton into a scene of bustle and excitement. At early morning the cattle, sheep etc. are hurried in and soon the morning train from Boston, omnibuses, carriages and other "vehicular mediums" bring a throng of drovers, buyers, speculators; so that, by 10 o'clock, there are generally gathered as many as two or three hundred vehicles in the area fronting the Cattle Fair Hotel.

The cattle market's patrons engaged in heavy drinking in the town's various hotels, most notably the Cattle Fair. As Hawthorne caustically observed, "The proprietors thereof throng the spacious barroom for the purpose of warming themselves in winter, and in summer 'cooling off'---the process for effecting both results being precisely the same."<sup>111</sup>

Another commentator emphasized two key aspects of mid-19th century Brighton, the transient character of its population and the highly developed commercial spirit prevailing there:

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<sup>111</sup> Hawthorne visited the Brighton Cattle Market and wrote this description during the period of his residency at Brook Farm in nearby West Roxbury. Nathaniel Hawthorne, American Notebooks, in Collected Works, 11th ed., vol. 9 (Boston, 1887) 248.

Many and many an old familiar face and form put in its regular appearance with the same punctuality as the arrival of the day of the week, and it is a fact that non-residents were even better known in connection with Brighton than some of her older residents.

The moneymaking spirit was so strong that other considerations were obliged to give way to the commercial imperative.

Men came long distances in those days to do business and their business had to be transacted no matter what stood in the way. Accordingly if the market day chanced to fall on Christmas Day, it by no means interfered with the progress of business and the sales were consummated just the same as usual.

The large number of transient traders bent on turning a quick profit also injured Brighton's reputation for honesty, respectability, and decorum, the essential prerequisites to middle class development.

It was but natural that the weekly trading of cattle in Brighton should draw thither men of speculative bent who wished to trade in something else besides cattle. The trade in milch cows and swine followed in the wake of the trade in cattle as a matter of course. But the Yankee, always alive to the chances for a trade, improved his opportunities to make a deal in anything which promised to bring in a modicum of dollars.... Attracted by the presence of large numbers of people, those whose business it is to dupe the credulous were represented in the weekly assemblage.

The public disorder that characterized market day was not limited to Mondays. Drove of cattle passed through Brighton's streets at all times, even on the sabbath. Cattle dealers often arrived in advance of market day in order to rest their livestock prior to sale. The day before and after were thus almost as busy as market day itself.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> "Old Brighton," The Item, 27 July 1889: 5.

Brighton's police force in the early 1840s consisted of a single town officer, the Constable, whose duties included the preservation of peace, the execution of warrants, the serving of writs, the collection and levying of fines, and the distribution of school and town reports. He was entitled to call upon any citizen for assistance in maintaining public order. The highly popular William R. Champney filled this post from 1837 until 1846 (serving also as Selectman from 1844), which suggests that he handled his duties in politic fashion.

The appointment of special police to patrol the streets on Market Day "to protect our citizens, female and children, from being run over by intoxicated horse traders, and others" was requested as early as May 1844, in a petition containing 34 signatures. The Brighton School Committee, it will be recalled, lent support to this initiative in its 1844 annual report with a strong appeal for better police regulation of Brighton Center.<sup>113</sup>

Some eighteen months later, in December 1845, Brighton adopted its first set of town by-laws, which were mostly concerned with reducing congestion and insuring orderly access to the Cattle Fair Hotel grounds on Market Day. Significantly, only one of nine provisions of the by-laws addressed the issue of disorderly behavior. Article 8 directed the Constable to enforce the provisions of the Massachusetts statutes relating to profane and obscene language, riotous conduct and gambling, adding that it would be his "special duty to prosecute all persons travelling on Sundays in said town in a noisy and unbecoming manner, or driving furiously over the public highways therein."<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 3, 27 May 1844.

<sup>114</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 3, 8 December 1845.

While the size of the permanent constabulary remained the same---a single officer---it did occasionally employ "special police" to lend assistance to its permanent officer. In 1846, for example, in addition to Constable Albert Clark (about whom little is known), the town occasionally employed David Hart (a storekeeper), Calvin Ricker (a market gardener) and Jonathan M. Pierce (a butcher) in the capacity of special officers. All three were young, rising businessmen.<sup>115</sup>

By 1853 a consensus had developed for additional police. Action came in May 1853 following receipt of a petition bearing 125 signatures, asking that two permanent "special constables" be added to the force to implement the 1845 by-laws on Market Day. Broadly representative of the town's population, the signers included thirty representatives of the cattle and slaughtering industry, eleven merchants and store keepers, ten farmers, six carpenters, as well as representatives of a wide variety of other occupations. On May 2, 1853 the town provided the requested additional personnel, this special force becoming a permanent part of Brighton's developing police department.<sup>116</sup>

That drunkenness was a problem is shown by a petition of the early 1850s, signed by twenty-four residents, asking that the town investigate the sale "contrary to the laws of the Commonwealth and against the peace and good

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<sup>115</sup> Brighton, Annual Report of Receipts and Expenditures for 1846-47 (Boston, 1847) 6; Massachusetts, Census of 1855, Brighton; Brighton, Annual Report of Receipts and Expenditures for 1854-55 (Boston, 1855) 17-35; Adams, Almanac for 1850, 95.

<sup>116</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 3, 22 April 1845 and May 2, 1853.

order of the town" of intoxicating liquor in Brighton.<sup>117</sup> Massachusetts was dry in this period, but the state prohibition laws were often totally ignored at the local level, which was apparently the case in Brighton. About half of the signers were Brighton Center shopkeepers and businessmen.<sup>118</sup> While the town took no specific action on this petition, it may have contributed to the 1853 decision to increase the size of the police force.

Brighton residents raised objections to gambling as well, viewing it as a wasteful and morally dangerous practice. That gaming was a problem in Brighton is demonstrated by a petition, dated March 1857, signed by twenty-seven residents, urging the Selectmen to take action against "two gambling implements (called roulette wheels) upon which every market day large sums of money are lost and won." The signers of this petition were again mostly either residents of the Brighton Center area or owners of businesses situated in that locale. A wide range of social classes were represented, from cattle broker Stephen H. Bennett, the prominent Dr. Whittemore, and the officers of Brighton's two banks, to various Brighton Center shopkeepers---a pump manufacturer, a shoemaker, a blacksmith, a wheelwright, a tailor, and the owner of an oyster bar in the Cattle Fair Hotel. The petitioners asked "as good loving citizens" that the town suppress gambling "not only from its immoral tendency but from its pecuniary effect upon some portion of our townsmen."<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 4, [n.d.] 1852.

<sup>118</sup> W. J. Rorabaugh, The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979) 217; Brighton Town Records, Box 3, c. 1853.

<sup>119</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 5, [n.d.] March 1857.

By the mid-1860s, the problem of maintaining public order had worsened to the point that an unprecedented demand arose for the establishment of a night police patrol. A petition, dating from early 1864, and containing twenty-five signatures, requested the establishment of a special police force to patrol the center of the town at night and on Sundays, it now being "no uncommon occurrence for ladies and others to be insulted in the streets, and that the evil is constantly increasing."<sup>120</sup> The presence on the streets of increased numbers of middle class women and the desire to differentiate these women from prostitutes may have contributed to the call for nocturnal patrolling.<sup>121</sup> Another 1864 petition, containing fifty-three signatures, complained that "the comfort and good order of the community are seriously disturbed on the Sabbath, by certain persons, driving rapidly through our streets, shouting and making other noisy demonstrations" and asked that the town "promptly and efficiently...suppress this disturbance, and secure to us the enjoyment of our right to quiet on Sunday, by the appointment of a special police, or by the adoption of any other measures which their wisdom may devise." While this petition bore the signatures of both the Congregational and Unitarian ministers (whose churches were situated in Brighton Center), fully half of the signers were butchers and meat dealers,

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<sup>120</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 13, [n.d.] 1864.

<sup>121</sup> Christine Stansell, in her study of sex and class in New York City, has taken note of an altered mid-19th century middle class consciousness of the streets as arenas of social contact. "Although the problems of the streets---the fights, the crowds, the crime, the children---were nothing new, the "problem" itself represented altered bourgeois perceptions and a broadened political initiative," she writes. "An area of social life that had been taken for granted, an accepted feature of city life, became visible, subject to scrutiny and observation." Christine Stansell, City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987) 197.

evidencing that even this element was now concerned by the disturbances of public order which the expansion of the cattle trade seemed to be generating.<sup>122</sup>

Then, on March 7, 1864, the Selectmen received still a third appeal, this one signed by 116 residents, requesting "the immediate appointment of several police officers, or constables, whose special duty it shall be to patrol the streets, lanes and all thoroughfares in said Brighton, on each and every night between sunset and sunrise, and arrest and place in confinement...all persons who they shall find...disorderly, or violating in a greater or lesser degree any law of this commonwealth."<sup>123</sup> The establishment of a night patrol was finally approved by the town on April 8, 1864.<sup>124</sup>

What these petitions demonstrate is a shift of attitude on the part of the cattle and slaughtering interests. The occupations of 128 of the 165 signers could be determined. Significantly, forty-two (nearly one-third of the whole number) were in cattle and slaughtering-related occupations. Even Stephen H. Bennett, Brighton's largest taxpayer, cattle dealer, and President of the Cattle Fair Hotel Corporation signed the 1864 petition.<sup>125</sup> An additional five signers (two auctioneers, a hotel keeper, a saloon keeper, and a bar tender) relied on the cattle industry for a considerable portion of their business. Thus, by 1864 even the cattle and slaughtering interests were demanding a more rigorous enforcement of the law. They supported increased police protection because the

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<sup>122</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 13, [n.d.] 1864.

<sup>123</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 13, 7 March 1864.

<sup>124</sup> Brighton Town Records, vol. 4: 228.

<sup>125</sup> A. Forbes and J. W. Greene, Rich Men of Massachusetts (Boston, 1851) 90.

expansion of their industry in the early 1860s, in response to wartime demands, and in the context of continued population growth, had made the level of disorder intolerable even to its principal beneficiaries.

Another element that supported the expansion of the policing function were individuals with a direct stake in the maintenance of public order in Brighton Center. These included Francis Harding, corn, flour and meal dealer; William Warren, apothecary; Hiram Cushman, expressman; Washington C. Allen, grocer; Asa Hunting, pumpmaker; Charles Heard, dry goods merchant; Isaac Braman and Augustus Mason, physicians; Jonas Fiske, harnessmaker; Frederic A. Whitney and Charles Noyes, ministers; Charles White, blacksmith; Life Baldwin and Bela Fiske, bank officers; and Levi Bush, Orrin Fairbanks, and Benjamin Fiske, owners of businesses or private residences near the cattle market.<sup>126</sup>

Even after the establishment of a night patrol in 1864, Brighton continued to devote much less money to police protection than Brookline. The first Brighton town report to classify police-related expenditures as a separate item appeared only in 1865 (in itself an indication of the lack of importance attached to the policing function). Brighton appropriation for police that year, a meager \$350, was the largest sum the town had expended for that purpose in its history. Brookline's 1865 spending on policing, by contrast, totalled \$1,572, four and a half times the amount its commercial neighbor was spending.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> G. M. Hopkins, Atlas of Suffolk County VII: Brighton, (Boston, 1875) plates G and H; Packard, A Biographical Directory of the Members of the Brighton Evangelical Congregational Society.

<sup>127</sup> Brighton, Auditor's Report of the Town of Brighton for 1865-66 (Boston, 1866) 25; Brookline, Auditor's Report of the Town of Brookline for 1865-66 (Boston, 1866) 19.

The 1841 to 1865 period thus saw Brighton expand its governmental services selectively, in ways that posed no threat to the well-being of the town's fringe zone industries. Some of Brighton's landowners (those residing in areas where the residential development potential was highest) tried to place the town's nuisance industries under a degree of regulation, but in this they were unsuccessful. They were concerned for the well-being of their families and the value of their property, but were too few to tip the political scales. Unlike Cambridge and Brookline, where Boston commuters played a crucial role as agents of change, in Brighton the stewards of the fringe zone economy retained a firm grip on the machinery of local government, playing an equally critical role as agents of continuity.

## **CHAPTER FOUR:**

### **COMMUTER SUBURB**

The decade of the 1850s proved to be a time of transforming change for Brookline. The many Boston commuters who moved there in these years quickly seized political control and expanded commuter-oriented public services. The town's population grew by 105 percent (from 2,516 to 5,160 inhabitants) in the 1850s, the fastest growth rate it was to experience in its entire history. Brighton's population grew in the 1850s as well, but by a comparatively modest 43 percent. More important than the numerical gain Brookline experienced, however, was the fundamental alteration of its social fabric, leading to a new and broader definition of the public interest.<sup>1</sup>

Before 1848, Brookline's politics had been dominated by its farmers. The town's farms then employed three out of every four male workers and generated three quarters of the value of all the goods produced.<sup>2</sup> As late as the 1840 to 1848 period, farmers filled a majority of all Selectmen's seats.

The owners of the great estates were, by contrast, not much interested in town politics. The focus of their concern was Boston, the metropolis where their business enterprises were located. In 1854 twenty-six owners of Brookline

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<sup>1</sup> The growth rate of the late 1840s was nearly as high as that of the 1850s, with the population increasing from 1,682 to 2,516, or by 49.6 percent between 1844 and 1850. This increase reflected the impact of the establishment of omnibus and rail service in the 1839 to 1848 period. Brookline, Town Records, vol. 1: 156.

<sup>2</sup> Karr, 161.

estates, individuals holding properties with an aggregate value of \$909,000, were non-residents for voting purposes. They included such eminent figures as David Sears, John L. Gardner, John E. Thayer, Ebenezer Francis, Dr. John C. Warren, Mortimer C. Ferris and William Amory.<sup>3</sup>

Such men had little need of the services town governments could provide. They could afford to buy services for themselves. Rarely did an elite families, for example, send their children to the Brookline Public Schools, preferring instead to enroll them in private institutions, or in the more highly-regarded Boston system.

Not all of Brookline's pre-1848 commuters belonged to the elite class, however. A handful of less affluent businessmen had also located in the Brookline Village.<sup>4</sup> Four such men won election to key town offices in the 1840s.

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<sup>3</sup> Brookline, Taxes for 1854 (Brookline, 1854).

<sup>4</sup> Prior to the introduction of railroad service in 1848, about thirty commuters were living near Brookline Village, along Harvard Street (the main thoroughfare) and intersecting roadways. One of these streets, Linden Place, it will be recalled, had been established by Boston Mayor Thomas Aspinwall Davis, on property inherited from his family in 1843. In the absence of railroad service, these early commuters utilized private conveyances or the Wellman omnibus line to get to work. Though much less wealthy as a group than the residents of the Gardner Hill and Longwood/ Cottage Farm districts, most were prosperous merchants, manufacturers, or lawyers (their average tax valuation in 1851 being \$14,500). They included a few men of substantial wealth such as Holmes Hinckley, President of the Boston Locomotives Works, who paid taxes on \$45,000 of property, boot and shoe manufacturer Elijah C Emerson, whose valuation stood at \$38,000, and book manufacturer Benjamin Bradley, with \$37,000 of taxable property. The great majority were a good deal less prosperous, however. At the low end of the spectrum stood Daniel H. Rogers, a lawyer, whose property valuation was \$4,200 and Thomas Bacon, a merchant, with taxable wealth totalling only \$3600. While the three largest taxpayers were manufacturers, a majority of these early commuters were merchants (60 percent) with lawyers comprising the second largest occupational group (25 percent). Two were public officials (a clerk in the State Treasurer's office and the Assistant

Benjamin B. Davis, a fifty-six year old fruit merchant, who was also a member of an old Brookline family, was chosen selectman, serving a single term in 1840-41. Andrew Newell, another merchant, served four terms as town treasurer in the 1840s, while attorneys George Homer and William Bowditch were elected to the School Committee in the 1846 to 1848 period.<sup>5</sup> While this commuter element showed a lively interest in town politics, their numbers were too few to have much impact before the 1850s.

The population explosion of the 1846 to 1860 period, which altered the political character of the town fundamentally, had two primary wellsprings: Irish-Catholic immigration and the Boston commuter influx. The town had been dominated by native-born, Protestant farmers before 1848. By 1860, however, 37.4 percent of Brookline's households (291 out of 775) were headed by persons of Irish birth, while another 25.2 percent, or 196, were headed by Boston commuters. In addition, large numbers of young, unmarried Irish women were employed as domestics in the homes of the native-born. Though the Irish outnumbered the commuters, they exerted little political influence. To the extent that they participated in the political process, they did so as clients of their employers, or of politically powerful figures like William Aspinwall, a long-term town officer and a leader (after 1861) of the Massachusetts Democratic Party. It was the somewhat less numerous, but politically and socially much better

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Collector of Customs of the Boston Customs House). George Adams, Boston Directory for the Year 1847-48 (Boston, 1848); U. S. Census, 1850, Population Schedule, Brookline; Brookline, List of Taxes and the Names of Taxpayers for the Years 1851, 52, 53.

<sup>5</sup> Brookline, Selectmen's Reports, 1840-48.

situated commuter element that was to play the key role in transforming Brookline in the 1850 to 1870 period.<sup>6</sup>

The new commuters resembled their pre-1848 Brookline Village counterparts rather than the owners of the great estates in wealth and social background. Of eighty-one who arrived between 1854 and 1860, for example, only three paid taxes on property of \$25,000 or more---a bank president and two merchants. And while 63 percent identified themselves as merchants, only five would appear to have been officers of major corporations.<sup>7</sup>

Few of these newcomers could afford to live in the elite Gardner Hill district. They tended to locate instead nearer the town's railroad depots (at Brookline Village, Longwood, and Cottage Farm), in the area west and north of Brookline Village.<sup>8</sup>

Here they built commodious homes on sizeable, well-landscaped lots, modest versions of the country estates the elite had earlier established in the Gardner Hill and Longwood/ Cottage Farm districts. Typical of these Brookline Village

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<sup>6</sup> U. S. Census, 1850 and 1860, Population Schedules, Brookline; Boston, City Directories, 1850 and 1860; "Aspinwall, William," Biographies, Pamphlet File, Brookline Room, Brookline Public Library. While the figure for Irish households derives from census schedules, that for commuter-headed households comes from the much less reliable city directories, and therefore should be regarded as a conservative figure.

<sup>7</sup> George Adams, Boston Directories, 1854-60; Brookline, Treasurer's Report of Receipts and Expenditures...with a List of Taxes and Names of Taxpayers for the Year 1860 (Boston, 1860) 3-39.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Census, 1860, Population Schedule, Brookline; Brookline, List of Taxes...for the Years 1851, 52, 53; Brookline, Treasurer's Report with a List of Taxes for 1860, 3-93; The Brookline, Jamaica Plain and West Roxbury Directory for 1868 (Boston, 1868).

commuter residences was the home of Ginnery Twitchell (who would later serve as President of the Boston & Worcester Railroad and as a member of Congress), a high-style Italianate mansion on Harrison Place (now Kent Street), dating from 1851, with an assessed valuation of \$6,000. James W. Edgerly, a commercial merchant, built on the same street in the mid-1850s a house worth \$6,500. The home of Boston locksmith William Hall on Harvard Avenue was worth \$8,000, while that of Boston merchant Richard L. Saville, on Alton Place, bore a value of \$7,500. All of these properties occupied sizeable lots ranging from 70,000 to 14,000 square feet.<sup>9</sup>

Another index of their prosperity was the extent to which the new commuters employed servants. An analysis of the 1860 census indicates that no less than 87 percent of Brookline commuter-headed households established between 1854 to 1860 employed live-in servants. The average for the town as a whole stood at a much lower 43.8 percent.<sup>10</sup>

By 1860 Brookline contained a sizeable commuter population, representing a broad spectrum of wealth and social status. Over one-third of the town's commuters (35.2 percent) paid taxes on property assessed at \$25,000 or more. About two-thirds of this wealthiest element resided in the elite Gardner Hill or the Longwood/ Cottage Farm districts. The top layer included, of course, the owners of the great estates, who were now more often listing themselves as Brookline residents for voting purposes. The number of non-residents with

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<sup>9</sup> Brookline Historical Commission, Brookline Village Walking Tours (Brookline, 1981) 40; George Adams, Boston City Directories, 1854-1860; Brookline, Treasurer's Report with a List of Taxes for 1860, 3-39; Brookline, Treasurer's Report with a List of Taxes for 1870, (Brookline, 1870) 2-67.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Census, 1860, Population Schedule, Brookline.

estates assessed at \$10,000 or more declined by 35 percent in the 1854 to 1860 period, while the aggregate value of properties held by non-residents fell by an even more impressive 43 percent.<sup>11</sup>

At the opposite end of the spectrum of wealth was an even larger contingent (comprising 38.5 percent of commuters), who held less than \$10,000 of real and personal property. These commuters were in many instances still struggling to establish themselves in business or in a profession. They were on average eight years younger than the wealthiest group (41 versus 49 years old) and the great majority lived, as one might expect, in the new residential neighborhood developing north and west of Brookline Village.<sup>12</sup>

The commuter element, whether old and new, rich or of the middling sort, occupied much common ground culturally. They shared a common ethnic heritage (Anglo-American), a common religion (Protestantism), and common social values which emphasized the importance of hard work, thrift, achievement and propriety. They also shared a pervasive sense of anxiety stemming from the rapid and destabilizing changes that were occurring in America in the 1830 to 1860 period---changes in economic relationships, in the structure and function of the family, and in the social and ethnic composition of society. The rise of market capitalism with its unpredictable cycles of prosperity and depression meant increased vulnerability for all classes. The huge influx of impoverished Roman

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<sup>11</sup> Brookline, List of Taxes for the Years 1851, 52, 53, 23-24; Brookline; Brookline, Tax List for 1854 (Brookline, 1854); Brookline, Tax List for 1860 (Brookline, 1860).

<sup>12</sup> Adams, Boston City Directory for 1860 (Boston, 1860); U. S. Census, 1860, Population Schedule, Brookline; Brookline, A List of Taxes for 1860 (Brookline, 1860).

Catholic immigrants entering New England threatened the cultural homogeneity that the middle and upper classes had always taken for granted and believed was necessary to a stable social order. Changes in the American political system (the rise of a mass electorate and of machine politics) and a marked increase in sectional tensions were raising serious doubts about the viability of the nation's republican institutions. No period of American history before or since has been more anxiety-ridden than the decades immediately preceding the Civil War. In Brookline the middle and upper classes found an orderly environment that provided as much security from the uncertainties of these new economic, social and political realities as was possible in an expanding capitalist society.<sup>13</sup>

The problems associated with rapid urbanization were also intensifying in the 1848 to 1860 period. The cities were not only growing in size, but were also becoming more culturally fragmented and socially segregated. The increase in noise and congestion in the downtown neighborhoods and the mounting fear of crime encouraged the middle and upper classes to flee the innermost residential districts. Removal of some sort had to be made---whether it be to the inner suburbs like the South End or Back Bay (after 1857), or outer suburbs like Brookline, Cambridge, Dorchester, West Roxbury or Milton.

The introduction of rail service between Boston and Brookline in 1848 came at the precise moment when this incentive to flee was intensifying. The new commuters were drawn to Brookline, in preference to other nearby towns, by the prestige it had already attained as an elite enclave. In moving to Brookline, they were seeking to duplicate (to the extent their more limited means would

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<sup>13</sup> Karr, 225.

allow) the admired way of life that their Brahmin predecessors had earlier established.<sup>14</sup>

The impulse to relocate in suburban towns stemmed also from a changing conception of the role home and family should play in American life. The old Puritan idea that social stability could best be achieved in a tight-knit community had given way by the middle of the 19th century to the radically different conviction that the separation of home and family from the world of commerce would promote stability and morality in a world growing increasingly unstable and immoral. The nation's intellectual leaders (its ministers and educators in particular) thus regarded the detached house and a separate and nurturing family environment to be essential to the restoration of the nation's spiritual health.

Many converging factors contributed to this new ideology. The growth of cities was one such factor. Americans regarded cities with deep suspicion. As Kenneth Jackson has written: "On the simplest and most basic level, the notion of life in a private house represented stability, a kind of anchor in the heavy seas of urban life."<sup>15</sup> America's novelists, poets, and painters were tending more and more to idealize nature in these years. The creation of a morally nurturing home environment required more than a separate establishment---it called for a home located in a semi-rural setting. No town near Boston was better able to satisfy

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<sup>14</sup> Jackson, Crabtree Frontier, 18-19 and 53; Winsor, vol. 3: 254; Matthew Edel, et al., Shaky Palaces: Home Ownership and Social Mobility in Boston's Suburbanization (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984) 49.

<sup>15</sup> Jackson, Crabgrass Frontier, 48-50 and 57.

that need than Brookline, with its magnificent vistas, prestigious elite enclaves, and almost complete absence of commercial and industrial development.<sup>16</sup>

This chapter is concerned chiefly with the rise of Brookline's commuter element to political dominance and the way governmental services were expanded in the 1850 to 1870 period to meet the needs of that element. It will also consider how the commuter class was able to accommodate and control a large Irish-Catholic population, which by 1855 comprised more than one-third of the town's inhabitants.

The Irish embodied many of the social problems they had hoped to escape by fleeing to Brookline. They were impoverished, largely unskilled, largely illiterate, relatively young, mostly unmarried, and clung to a religion that Brookline's Protestants both feared and detested. As historian Dennis Ryan has noted of Boston's Irish, these "unskilled laborers from rural backgrounds...were misfits in Boston's urban and commercial setting, where a special skill or trade was necessary in order to earn a living."<sup>17</sup> Thus they had little choice but to take whatever employment was available, at whatever wages could be garnered. A large number gravitated toward Brookline, with its emergent suburban economy, not because it offered promise of a better life, but because it offered employment at a time when jobs were difficult to come by. Irish social, economic, and political progress, slow everywhere around Boston, was especially slow in the elite suburb.

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<sup>16</sup> Jackson, Crabgrass Frontier, 46.

<sup>17</sup> Dennis P. Ryan, Beyond the Ballot Box: A Social History of the Boston Irish (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983) 21.

The rise of the commuter element to power was quite rapid. Not one of the thirteen men who served on the Brookline Board of Selectmen in the 1820 to 1840 period had been a Boston commuter. Of the thirty-two men elected to key public offices (moderator, selectman, clerk, assessor, school committeeman, or representative) for the first time in the decade of the 1840s, only four (12.5 percent) had been commuters. In the forties, the most common occupational categories among Brookline officeholders had been farmer. Only eight first time officeholders (25 percent) engaged in trade, some of which was centered in Brookline Village rather than in Boston.<sup>18</sup>

By contrast, no less than fifteen of thirty-six individuals elected to town offices for the first time in the 1850s (41.7 percent) were commuters. By 1859, merchants (the great majority of them commuters) held as many key offices in Brookline's government as farmers. The commuters elected in the 1850s included three merchants, three lawyers, two bankers, two manufacturers, an insurance underwriter, an accountant, the president of a railroad, a civil engineer, and a customs house officer. Despite a slowing of the rate of overall population growth from 48.5 percent in the first half of the 1850s to 38.2 percent in the second half, the incidence of commuter election to town offices continued accelerating. By the 1860 to 1865 period, commuters made up fifty percent of newly elected officeholders.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> U. S. Census, 1850, Population Schedule, Brookline; George Adams, Boston City Directories, 1840-49; George Adams, An Almanack and Business Directory of the Cities of Cambridge, Charlestown and Roxbury and the Towns of Chelsea, Dorchester and Brookline for the Year 1848 (Boston, 1848).

<sup>19</sup> The slower rate of population increase in the second half of the 1850s may have been related to the Panic and Depression of 1857. Another factor that may have slowed growth was the opening of Boston's Back Bay to development

The number of heads of household with Boston business addresses doubled in the second half of the 1850s, rising from ninety-six in 1855 to 196 in 1860, a 104.2 percent increase in a brief five year period. By 1860 one in four of Brookline's households was headed by a Boston commuter.<sup>20</sup> However, the power Brookline's commuters acquired in the 1850s reflected more than increased numbers. It reflected also the economic and social importance of that element as a whole (old and new commuters combined). In 1860, of the twenty Brookline residents paying taxes on estates assessed at \$200,000 or more, sixteen, or 80 percent, were commuters. Of the forty-eight taxpayers with estates assessed at \$100,000 or more, thirty-four, or 70.8 percent, were commuters. Of those paying taxes on estates of \$50,000 or more, sixty out of ninety-six, or 62.5 percent were commuters---nearly two-thirds of the total number. Thus Brookline's wealthiest element was by 1860 also predominantly a commuter element.<sup>21</sup>

The rise of the commuters to a commanding position was accompanied by a decline in the influence of Brookline's farmers. Agriculture in both Brookline

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in 1857. One must bear in mind, of course, that even a 38.2 percent increase represents a very impressive rate of growth in a period of economic distress. Also, while the numbers of commuters entering Brookline may have slowed, commuter headed households were still on the rise, adding to the political influence of that element. George Adams, Boston City Directories, 1850-59; Kingman, 835-839; U. S. Census, 1850 and 1860, Population Schedule, Brookline.

<sup>20</sup> Massachusetts Census, 1855, Brookline; U. S. Census, 1860, Population Schedules, Brookline; Adams, Boston City Directories, 1854 and 1860.

<sup>21</sup> George Adams, Boston City Directory for 1860 (Boston, 1860); Brookline, Treasurer's Report with a List of Taxes for 1860, 3-39.

and Brighton had been revolutionized by the growth of Boston. After 1820 production of goods for the Boston market---especially vegetables, fruit, and hay (needed by the city's large number of work horses) dominated Brookline agriculture. By 1840 the goods produced by its market gardens had become Brookline's single most valuable product. By 1845, they accounted for no less than 78 percent of the town's entire agricultural output.<sup>22</sup>

The commuter influx introduced forces that cut away huge swaths of Brookline's agricultural landscape. Whereas 2,154 acres had been under some form of cultivation in 1850 (more than half of the surface area of the town), by 1870 only 909 acres were being farmed (less than a quarter of the town). The number of farms fell as well---from thirty-six in 1850 (with an average of 75.4 acres of improved land) to twenty-six in 1870 (averaging 48.2 acres of improved land).<sup>23</sup>

While the dollar value of Brookline's market garden products was 25 percent higher in 1870 than it had been in 1850, the increase had not kept pace with inflation. In addition, the demand for suburban housing was on the rise. Boston's population expanded by 83 percent between 1850 and 1870. The subdivision of farm acreage into residential building lots yielded higher profits than farming. Not only were farmers willing to abandon agriculture for development, but they often became fervent advocates of relatively

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<sup>22</sup> Robert Dale Karr, "The Transformation of Agriculture in Brookline, 1770-1885," Historical Journal of Massachusetts 15 (January 1987): 38-41; Kingman, 871.

<sup>23</sup> U. S. Census, 1850 and 1860, Agricultural Schedule, Brookline.

indiscriminate varieties of development.<sup>24</sup> The shift to a more service-oriented government was smoother in Brookline than in Brighton because Brookline's major landowners (the only group powerful enough to challenge the commuter element) were among the primary beneficiaries of expanded government. Rapid residential development drove up land values, which put money in the pockets of farmers.

The rise to power of Brookline's commuters in the 1850s led to a new definition both of what constituted the public interest and of the proper role of town government. Government as redefined in these years encompassed the provision of modern public facilities, an expanded road system, the construction of sidewalks, the installation of street lighting along the town's main thoroughfares, the reform of the public schools, and the creation of modern fire and police departments. Whereas proposals for expanding services would face serious opposition in Brighton and Cambridge, where fringe-zone interests exerted varying degrees of opposition, in Brookline no such obstacle blocked the road to the establishment of a full range of services.<sup>25</sup> The appropriation figures speak for themselves. Overall government spending in Brookline rose from \$146,530 in the 1850 to 1854 period to \$289,702 in the 1855 to 1859 period, or by 97.7 percent. Public education expenditure increased from \$52,918 to \$102,829, or by 94.3 percent. Spending on roads, sidewalks, and gutters rose

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<sup>24</sup> U. S. Census, 1850 and 1870, Agricultural Schedule, Brookline; Winsor, vol. 3: 255 and 278.

<sup>25</sup> Binford, 200-201.

from \$26,601 to \$40,578, or by 52.5 percent. Spending on fire protection increased from \$1,862 to \$4,771.37, or by 156.2 percent.<sup>26</sup>

Brookline's spending moved well ahead of Brighton's in the post-1850 period, as the following figures illustrate:

Total Government Expenditure, Brighton and Brookline, 1850-1865

Brighton -	\$524,502
Brookline -	1,033,629

Even after taking Brookline's larger population into account, the spending differential is quite striking; \$248 per capita in Brookline versus only \$168 in Brighton. By the 1860s, Brookline was spending at twice the rate of Brighton.<sup>26</sup>

Government Expenditure, Brighton and Brookline, 1860-1865<sup>27</sup>

Brighton -	\$ 279,343
Brookline -	597,343

Brookline could well afford this spending. With its large Brahmin element it had always been a wealthy town. Now, however, its property valuation more than doubled, rising from \$4,708,400 in 1848 to \$10,799,800 in 1860. Taxes rose as well, from \$2.10 per thousand in 1850 to \$5.50 per thousand in 1860, but

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<sup>26</sup> Brookline, Treasurer's Reports of Receipts and Expenditures, 1850-1859.

<sup>27</sup> Brighton, Annual Reports of Receipts and Expenditures, 1841-1865; Brookline, Treasurer's Reports of Receipts and Expenditures, 1841-1865.

the burden on the individual taxpayer was still relatively light.<sup>28</sup> In 1853, Brookline contained eighty-four residents with property valuations of \$25,000 or more, a substantial sum at that time. Brighton, by contrast, had only about thirty residents of comparable wealth.<sup>29</sup>

By 1870 the gap between Brookline and Brighton had widened still more. The value of all taxable property in Brookline totalled \$18,948,300 as compared to just \$5,860,161 in Brighton. Thus Brookline contained \$2,849 of taxable property for each of its residents versus Brighton's relatively meager \$1,180.<sup>30</sup>

Brookline's town government not only devoted more dollars to the traditional categories of expenditure (streets, schools, fire and police protection), but instituted many new services (a public library, an adult education program, street lighting). The commuter element demanded such services.

No single facet of the expansion of Brookline's public services demonstrates more clearly its commitment to becoming a fit place of residence for upper class commuters than its road-building program. The town's roads were viewed chiefly as carriageways for commuters and the town's sidewalks as necessary for the great numbers of residents who "transact their daily business in Boston, and reach the city by other means than their own conveyances," and who were accordingly "compelled to walk...to and from the railroad, horse-car, or

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<sup>28</sup> Kingman, 841.

<sup>29</sup> The Brighton figure is merely an estimate. An exact comparison is impossible since Brighton's 1854 tax valuation list (the closest in point of time) does not furnish property valuation figures, only the dollar amount of taxes due. Brighton, Annual Report of the Receipts and Expenditures for 1854-55, 17-39.

<sup>30</sup> Kingman, 841; Brighton, Official Reports for 1870-71 (Brighton, 1871) 40.

omnibus."<sup>31</sup> Brookline invested \$126,913.74 in the improvement of its roads, bridges, and drainage in the 1850 to 1865 period, as compared to Brighton's \$52,647.93. What makes this wide differential especially significant was the nature of travel and traffic in the two towns. Brighton's roads were much more heavily traveled than Brookline's, especially by commercial vehicles, yet Brookline spent two and a half times more on its roads than Brighton.<sup>32</sup> Such had not always been the case. In 1844, before the great commuter influx, Brookline had maintained only seventeen miles of public highways, comprising a mere fifteen roads. Town meetings frequently rejected road building proposals (Beacon Street being a case in point) to avoid higher taxes. After 1850, by contrast, the town's commitment to road building was both consistent and enthusiastic. Its expenditure on roads exceeded Brighton's in fourteen of the fifteen years between 1851 and 1865. Older roads were widened, graded, and straightened, while a large number of new thoroughfares were put through. By 1861, Brookline's road system had developed into a thirty-six mile network, purportedly the finest in any town near Boston. By 1868, that network included 101 streets, places, and avenues.<sup>33</sup>

Brookline expanded its road system to accomodate its growing commuter population. The end purpose for which roads were constructed in Brighton was

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<sup>31</sup> Brookline, Report of the Committee on the Repair of Roads (Boston, 1865) 20.

<sup>32</sup> Brookline, Treasurer's Reports of Receipts and Expenditures, 1851-65; Brighton, Official Reports for 1870-71, 67.

<sup>33</sup> E. F. Woodward, Roads, &c.. in the Town of Brookline. (Brookline, 1844) 11; Brookline, Selectmen's Report for 1860-61 (Boston, 1861), 25; The Brookline, Jamaica Plain and West Roxbury Directory for 1868, 29-31.

altogether different: there highways were seen as commercial thoroughfares, not convenient travel surfaces for commuters. There was little point in investing heavily in the upkeep of such roads, since the heavy vehicles that utilized them quickly destroyed improvements.

The first major road building project to be undertaken by Brookline in the post-1850 period was the construction of Beacon Street (discussed in Chapter 2). Much of the residential development that the town experienced in the 1850s occurred along streets running off of this major thoroughfare. An 1853 town report on the Beacon Street project predicted the rise of a compact residential district around Brookline Village as a by-product of its construction and characterized the existing residential neighborhood lying north and west of Brookline Village as "but the first sprinklings of a heavy shower about to pour itself upon the broad fields and pastures of the ancient muddy river hamlet."<sup>34</sup>

Other major road-building projects of the 1850 to 1853 period included the widening and improvement of Walnut, Warren, and Brighton Streets, three of the town's principal roadways, as well as the streets adjacent to the town hall in Brookline Village. As early as 1856, Brookline's Selectmen felt justified in declaring, "We have the best roads for pleasure or business driving in the State and those who have occasion to drive over them give the town due credit thereof." The board went on to urge further improvements---the building of sidewalks so that pedestrians might enjoy Brookline's pleasant scenery in safety; the paving of gutters, which would reduce long-term street maintenance costs; and the planting of ornamental trees and shrubberies to enhance the town's

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<sup>34</sup> Brookline, Report of the Committee...for Building a Road from the End of the Mill Dam to Washington Street, February 25, 1853, 7.

residential character. Progress was made in all of these areas in the pre-Civil War years. Brookline also invested heavily in street lighting. In 1861, the Selectmen noted proudly, "There are now sixty-six lamps in the streets lighted by gas, and eleven lighted by fluid; and the number will probably be increased every year."<sup>35</sup>

Much of the new road building took place in the area between Brookline Village and Beacon Street, the neighborhood favored by the new commuter element. Abutters made a major contribution to the improvement of the road system by making gifts of land to the town. Colonel Thomas Aspinwall, who owned the land through which Aspinwall Avenue would pass, not only furnished the land for the roadway at no charge, but also paid for the construction of a bridge over the railroad tracks at the eastern end of the avenue.<sup>36</sup>

Another key roadbuilding project undertaken in 1857 was the construction of a bridge across the Muddy River, north of the Longwood Railroad Station, and the laying out of the present Longwood Avenue, extending from the bridge to Harvard Street and Beacon Street. Local landowners Charles and Marshall Stearns were so anxious to have Longwood Avenue and the bridge constructed that they offered to "give the land and build the road from Sewall's avenue to the bridge and furnish all the gravel that shall be necessary for building said road and

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<sup>35</sup> Brookline, Treasurer's Reports of Receipts and Expenditures for 1850-51 (Boston, 1851) 7-8; Brookline, Treasurer's Reports of Receipts and Expenditures for 1851-52, 10; Brookline, Selectmen's Report for 1855-56 (Boston, 1856) 25 and 27-28; Brookline Selectmen's Report for 1861-62 (Boston, 1862) 26.

<sup>36</sup> Brookline, Muddy River and Brookline Records (Boston, 1875) 556-557; Brookline, Selectmen's Report for 1857-58 (Boston, 1858) 27-28.

bridge free of expense to the town." When Longwood Avenue was laid out by the Selectmen on August 22, 1857, no provision was made to compensate the landowners, "because the benefit to the owners of said lands is greater than the damages sustained by them in consequence of laying out said town way."<sup>37</sup>

Some of the new roads constructed in the 1850 to 1865 period were privately owned, the town having refused to accept them because they were less than forty feet wide. In 1858, the Selectmen urged the town "to see what private-ways or streets there are that have been made forty feet or more wide, and that the same be laid out as public-ways wherever desired." They also recommended that "in widening the streets...in many cases, the abutters should defray a portion of the expense, if the town will proceed at once to have them widened."<sup>38</sup> Thus the town served both to stimulate and to regulate development.

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<sup>37</sup> Brookline, Muddy River and Brookline Records, 566 and 579-580.

<sup>38</sup> Brookline, Selectmen's Report for 1857-58 (Boston, 1858) 24; Robin L. Einhorn, in her study of the private financing of infrastructure in Chicago, contends that 19th century American cities sought to minimize the redistributive effects that general systems of taxing and spending had upon wealth by removing as many public services as possible from general funding. This was especially true of street-building, she notes, which was "kept almost totally off-budget in special assessment systems controlled by 'interested parties.'" However, Massachusetts cities and towns did not authorize such practices until the early 1860s. In April 1861 Brighton adopted a state law which allowed its Selectmen to assess one half of the expense of some sidewalks to abutters. The Massachusetts legislature did not authorize the City of Boston to levy such special assessments until 1866. Despite the 1857-58 suggestion that Brookline resort to the practice of relying on abutters to pay for a portion of improvements, there is no evidence on the public record of the town's having done so on a systematic basis. However, Brookline landowners sometimes made such improvements voluntarily or gave sizeable parcels to the town as an inducement to make public improvements. Robin L. Einhorn, Property Rules: Political Economy in Chicago, 1833-1872 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) 15; Brighton, Treasurer's Report for 1860-61 (Cambridge, 1861) 25; Michael Frisch, Town Into City: Springfield, Massachusetts and the Meaning of

A major addition to Brookline's expanding road system was made in 1859 with the laying out of Colchester, Carlton, Prescott, Ivy, and Mountfort Streets in the Longwood-Cottage Farm area. These streets, the Board of Selectmen reported, "were laid out and graded to the width of forty feet by the Hon. David Sears, Amos A. and William R. Lawrence, and Charles and Marshall Stearns, in laying out their grounds in the easterly part of the town." They were laid out at no expense to the town, except an estimated one hundred dollars on Essex Street.<sup>39</sup> The original projectors of these neighborhoods thereby continued to shape their development ensuring that it would be consistent with earlier patterns.

Brookline reduced its appropriation for the construction and maintenance of highways in 1861 and 1862 while recruiting and provisioning soldiers for the Union Army (\$48,000 was spent on the military in fiscal year 1862-63 alone).<sup>40</sup> However, after a two year hiatus, the town resumed appropriating large sums for road construction and road maintenance. Its 1863 expenditure of \$14,164.67 was the largest since the completion of Beacon Street in 1851. The Selectmen noted in their 1864 report,

in order to get [Brookline's roads] up to their former standard, we were obliged to go to much greater expense than we otherwise should have done. Yet we did not see how less could have been done, and the streets and ways brought to and kept in their former excellent order. We think that good highways are a source of as much enjoyment and pleasure to all of

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Community, 1840-1880 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972) 43; Charles Phillips Huse, The Financial History of Boston (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916) 73, 154-155 and 307-308.

<sup>39</sup> Brookline, Selectmen's Report for 1858-59 (Boston, 1859) 23.

<sup>40</sup> Brookline, Selectment's Report for...1863-64 (Boston, 1864), 20 and 22; Brookline, Selectmen's Report...for 1864-65 (Boston, 1865) 22.

our citizens as any of our public institutions; and we hope that in no coming time will this part of our public expenditure be neglected.<sup>41</sup>

The importance Brookline attached to its road system is evident in the measures it adopted in 1865, when acting upon the recommendation of a special committee, it removed its Selectmen from detailed supervision of its highways, shifting responsibility to a professional engineer, the new Supervisor of Highways, J. Herbert Shedd. The Committee on the Repair of Roads, which recommended the changes, was a distinguished body, and generated an impressive document. Committee members included Boston attorneys Theophilus P. Chandler and William Aspinwall, civil engineers Edward S. Philbrick and J. Herbert Shedd, and businessman Edward Atkinson. All five members were commuters.<sup>42</sup>

While acknowledging the town's generous support of good roads over the years ("no tax is apparently paid with more cheerfulness by our people than that for the repair of the roads," it declared), the report's central contention was that the money spent on road construction and maintenance had often been "sadly misapplied" owing to a lack of a regular system of repairs.

A temporary repair, such as may last till the next wintry deluge shall sweep it away, seems, frequently, the farthest bound to which the common notions of road-making have extended; as if the annual appropriation was designed for the benefit of the present year, and that alone.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Brookline, Selectmen's Report for 1863-64, 22.

<sup>42</sup> U.S. Census, 1860, Population Schedule, Brookline; Boston, City Directory, 1865.

<sup>43</sup> Brookline, Report of the Committee on the Repair of Roads (Boston, 1865) 4.

What was needed, the committee asserted, was a more professional approach to the construction and maintenance of the towns roadways. To that end it urged the elimination of the post of district Surveyor of Highways, which was filled at the annual town meeting. The report indicted these "amateurs," usually a farmer or other local, in the strongest possible terms, accusing them of pursuing personal or narrowly local interests rather than the broader public interest, or worse still, of neglecting their responsibilities altogether.

If such persons mean to signalize themselves, during their being in office, the first step is often to undo what their predecessor has done...; and the love of self and of friends determines them to make sure, while they have it in their power, that some favored roads are put into proper order. If the Surveyor is, on the contrary, an unwilling officer, or if the attention to his own affairs prevents his giving his time to the duties of his office, he pays the bills and wages without much knowledge of their nature or accuracy, and one of the laborers becomes, in fact, the road Surveyor.

Most to be regretted, the report continued, was a lack of continuity in the post of Surveyor of Highways, a tendency to rely upon inexperienced men to do a job which required a high degree of technical knowledge.

But, in every case of nomination, there is this evil: that, as soon as the Surveyor has, by a year's apprenticeship, begun to know something of the nature of the business, his place is filled by another, who comes in for the same time to take lessons at the expense of the public.<sup>44</sup>

Not content merely to indict the old system as inefficient, the committee went on to question the integrity of popularly-elected road surveyors.

The Surveyor may sometimes be a man who makes his sense of public duty subordinate to private advantage, or to feelings of good neighborhood:

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<sup>44</sup> Brookline, Report of the Committee on the Repair of Roads, 6.

consequently much time is wasted; and, not infrequently, the public funds are so appropriated, that, under pretense of doing the public service, private interests are subserved.

The committee also urged sweeping changes in Brookline's road construction and maintenance procedures, including the abandonment of the long-standing practice "of permitting every person either to pay his tax, or work it out, at his option," a method it labelled, "one of the few relics of a barbarous age, which the spirit of our free institutions has not yet shaken off." Road maintenance, it asserted, should instead be placed in the hands of "professional road-makers of science and experience." Instead of relying on several elected surveyors and an amateur work force, Brookline was urged to establish a highway department under the direction of a single superintendent---a department of "probably five men in the summer, and four in the winter," with additional men employed by the day as needed. Tools and equipment (horses, carts, and implements) should be publicly owned and kept at public expense. Such measures would not only contribute to the improvement of the town's road system, the committee maintained, but would lead to significant savings.

With such an arrangement as this, under a good superintendent, it is our deliberate judgment that half the money heretofore appropriated for the care of the roads would keep them in as good condition as formerly; and an equal appropriation would much increase the comfort of the travelling public, as well as materially increase the reputation, already good, of the Brookline roads.<sup>45</sup>

Taking account of Brookline's special character as a commuter suburb and underscoring the heavier reliance its residents had come to place on public

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<sup>45</sup> Brookline, Report of the Committee on the Repair of Roads, 6-8.

transportation, the committee also recommended that greater attention be given the construction of good and durable sidewalks.

The condition of that portion of the roads devoted exclusively to the use of pedestrians, is, in such a town as Brookline, as important as that of the carriage-way. Most of the persons in this town transact their daily business in Boston, and reach the city by other means than their own conveyances. These persons, therefore, are, for the most part, compelled to walk, in Brookline, to and from the railroad, horse-car, or omnibus; and the town is therefore bound to furnish them, at all seasons of the year, an easy and cleanly path to travel on.<sup>46</sup>

The recommendations set forth in this report were immediately adopted by the town.<sup>47</sup> In approving these recommendations, Brookline's electorate signalled its support for a new standard of professionalism in local government. An increasing reliance on the advice and direction of professionals was to be found both in urban and suburban communities in the second half of the 19th century. Experts of all kinds---engineers, landscape architects, educators, physicians---were gaining greater influence and authority in governmental circles.<sup>48</sup> In Brookline, however, the shift came relatively early. Support for increased professionalism was strong in the elite suburb for two reasons. In the context of the new and expanded services older decisionmaking procedures no longer sufficed. More was being asked of government and of its personnel. In addition, Brookline now contained a much larger population of professional men

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<sup>46</sup> Brookline, Report of the Committee on the Repair of Roads, 21.

<sup>47</sup> Brookline, Selectmen's Report for 1865-1866 (Boston, 1866) 22.

<sup>48</sup> Jon Teaford, The Unheralded Triumph: City Government in America, 1870-1900 (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1984) 9.

that it could tap to give effect to new policies. In 1860, thirty-six Brookline heads of household (4.4 percent of the total number) were lawyers, civil engineers, architects, and physicians. Voters turned more often to such men to fill key public offices or to serve on special committees, such as the Committee of the Repair of Roads. In the 1860s, for example, Road Committee member Edward Philbrick, a prominent civil engineer, was elected selectman six times. Three of the town's four physicians and one of its architects were elected to the school committee. Thomas B. Hall, a Boston attorney, served as town assessor throughout the decade. Another Boston attorney, George F. Homer, held the post of representative.<sup>49</sup>

Brookline also expanded governmental services in the 1850s by establishing a public library. Prior to 1850 it had showed less interest in libraries than Brighton. Both towns established subscription libraries in the mid-1820s, but whereas the Brighton Social Library (founded in 1824) survived until it was superceded by the Brighton Library Association in 1858, the Brookline Social Library (established in 1825) did not survive, lacking upper class patronage. The founders of the Brighton Social Library included Abraham Edwards, a prominent lawyer who served as both selectman and moderator in the early 1830s, and Jonathan and Francis Winship, owners of the town's largest horticultural establishment. It was established by Brighton's business and professional leaders for their own use.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Brookline, Selectmen's Reports, 1860-1869; U. S. Census, 1860, Population Schedule, Brookline.

<sup>50</sup> Edwards, who left Brighton for Cambridge in the mid-1830s, was in 1854 elected the fourth Mayor of Cambridge. Paige, 469; Catalog of Books Belonging to the Brighton Social Library, January 1, 1836, with the Constitution (Boston,

The initiative for the establishment of the Brookline Social Library had come from three officers of the First Church, Reverend John Pierce, and church deacons Otis Withington and John Robinson, who served respectively as the library's president, secretary, and treasurer. The owners of Brookline's great estates, men of learning and culture, apparently played no part in establishing or patronizing this institution. The elite, which was grounded economically and socially in Boston, had little interest in Brookline's institutional development. They had no need of the services libraries provided. Indeed, the very opposite would seem to have been the case. Mary W. Poor, in her recollections of Brookline in the 1820s, remembered that her father (Reverend Pierce) relied upon Thomas Handasyd Perkins' private library in the years before the establishment of the Social Library.

Colonel Perkins was supposed to buy all that were worth reading and was most kind in lending them to acquaintances. Many of them found their way to the parsonage. I remember that the moment a borrowed book came into the house it was carefully covered and placed on a shelf which children could not touch.<sup>51</sup>

It was Brookline's artisans rather than the owners of its great estates, or even its religious leaders, who took the next step toward the establishment of a public library. In 1846 a group of young Brookline mechanics, wishing to improve

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1836) 3-5.

<sup>51</sup> Poor, 17-18; The Lyceum Movement also attracted strong support in Brookline at an early date. In 1832, a group of local residents under the leadership of Isaac Thayer and Dr. Samuel A. Shurtleff organized a local chapter. In 1841 the lyceum was incorporated as the Union Hall Association which built an auditorium in Brookline Village called Lyceum Hall. Curtis, 229-230; Bolton, 114.

their minds through discussion and wider reading, and perhaps unable or unwilling to pay the high \$5 annual membership fee charged by the Social Library, agreed to rent a space where they could accumulate books and periodicals and hold meetings. This library was established as much for the opportunities it afforded for social intercourse as for book borrowing. As one of the founders of this association, Benjamin F. Baker, a painter-glazier, later recounted:

Each one was to contribute whatever he might have of books, or papers, whether of biography, travel, fiction, or other works that might be of interest. In pursuance of this object a small room was hired and fitted out with some rough shelves and tables; each one brought his contribution of books and other matter, and they were used interchangeably. They also subscribed for and took newspapers from Boston, New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Washington, and New Orleans.

This room was first opened in the autumn, and was kept open in the evening through the winter and summer, so that the members could visit it when they had an opportunity (each member having a key). They also occasionally hired a larger room and had discussion on the topics of the day, or read papers on some subject, or recited and read poetry or prose.<sup>52</sup>

No public money was furnished this organization. Each member paid an annual fee and was given a key to the library room, which he was free to visit at his own convenience. The association survived only three years, however. In the fall of 1849, noted Baker, "the news of the finding of gold in California reached the town. Several of the members were taken with the gold fever, and various circumstances arising to call others away, the association was disbanded."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Bolton, 124-125.

<sup>53</sup> Bolton, 125.

Despite this rather poor start, Brookline became a pioneer in the field by founding a public library in 1857, only three years after the establishment in Boston of the nation's first major public library. The explanation for this turnaround would seem to lie, as in the case of road improvements, in the rise of the commuter element to political power. Not only did the town approve the 1857 proposal to establish a public library without dissent, but the twelve-member board of trustees that it established to administer the facility was dominated by the commuter element. Eight of its twelve members were commuters (three attorneys, two manufacturers, a merchant, the president of a railroad, and the president of a bank), with two wealthy farmers (both members of the Board of Selectmen), a minister, and Benjamin F. Baker (town clerk since 1852) comprising the balance.<sup>54</sup>

Timing had much to do with Brookline's primacy in instituting a public library. In contrast to the public school reform movement, which was launched in the late 1830s, years before the large-scale commuter influx, the public library movement was a phenomenon of the 1850s, of the period when Brookline's commuter element was redefining the role of local government. The movement thus found a highly responsive audience in Brookline.

Brighton proved somewhat less responsive. An unsuccessful attempt had been made to establish a public library in the market town in 1853 when a group of prominent citizens secured the incorporation of the the Union Association with the object of establishing "a lyceum, a public library, and courses and lectures on scientific subjects." While the scheme enjoyed the support of the town's three

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<sup>54</sup> Brookline, Town Records, vol. 1: 550 and 561-563.

Selectmen and several prominent butchers and landowners, in the absence of broad public support, the hoped for public facility failed to materialize.<sup>55</sup>

A major step was taken in 1858 with the foundation of the Brighton Library Association, an organization combining the functions of library and lyceum. Its founders viewed it as a public library in embryo. The group's by-laws stipulated that "the trustees shall deliver up to the Town of Brighton, or persons authorized by the town to receive it, the library and other property of the association, whenever said town of Brighton shall make suitable provision for the maintenance and increase of the library." However, Brighton failed to respond. While it provided quarters for the library in the Town Hall, it furnished no other support. Access to the library was thus limited to dues-paying members---any resident fourteen years of age or older who could afford the one dollar a year fee (payable in installments of as little as five cents a week). The library's collection was also rather small, in 1859 comprising only 520 volumes. Members were entitled to borrow only one book per visit and the collection was open only five hours a week, on Saturdays from 2 to 5 and 7 to 9 p.m. Despite further pleas for public support, the town declined repeatedly to provide assistance.<sup>56</sup>

Only in 1864, when James Holton, a wealthy resident, left Brighton a sizeable legacy earmarked for the purchase of books for a public library, did the town at last relent. The \$6,000 legacy would be conferred on Brighton, Holton's

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<sup>55</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the early history of the library movement in Brighton see William P. Marchione, "James Holton's Legacy," Allston-Brighton Journal, 16 July 1987: 11 and 20 August 1987; Massachusetts General Court, Acts of 1852-53, Chapter 167.

<sup>56</sup> Catalog of Books Belonging to the Brighton Library Association (Boston, 1859) 6-24.

will provided, only if the town agreed to "procure a suitable room and furniture, and appoint a suitable person as librarian, who shall safely keep said books and care for same." The will also stipulated, "If said town shall refuse to accept the bequest on the above-named terms, then I shall give and bequeath said six thousand dollars to my residuary legatees." Not wishing to lose this sizeable sum, Brighton accepted Holton's terms on April 8, 1864, assumed the Library Association's collection, and named a fourteen member Board of Trustees to govern the new public facility, naming it the Holton Library in honor of its benefactor.<sup>57</sup>

In contrast to the commuter-dominated Brookline board, almost half of the the Holton Library's trustees were local businessmen---three bankers, two slaughter house proprietors, and the owner of a lumber yard. Other non-commuters included the headmaster of Brighton High School and the Reverend Whitney of the First Church. Only four of the board's fourteen trustees commuted to Boston---two being politically active lawyers, Joseph A. Pond, a former Boston resident who had served on both the Boston Common Council and the commission that supervised the construction of the Boston Public Library, and Town Clerk William Wirt Warren. Both men achieved notable political success in later years, Pond serving as President of the State Senate and Warren as a congressman. The other two commuters were J. P. C. Winship, who was employed as a clerk in his uncle's marine insurance business

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<sup>57</sup> Brighton, First Annual Report of the Trustees of the Holton Library, February 1, 1865 (Boston, 1865) 57-73.

on State Street, and Selectman Weare D. Bickford, owner of a Boston ship chandlery business.<sup>58</sup>

It is the eagerness with which Brookline embraced the public library movement, rather than Brighton's somewhat slower response, that warrants our attention. Brighton was not especially laggard in establishing a public library. It did so, in fact, ahead of a number of its neighbors. Brookline, however, embraced the movement with great fervor and at an earlier date than any nearby town. A Brookline resident, Elisha Hall, a member of the private library that had suspended operations in 1849, is credited with having persuaded Horace Mann to draft the 1851 legislation authorizing the cities and towns of Massachusetts to raise and appropriate money for public libraries. Moreover, Brookline's initial appropriation was the largest that the law would allow: \$934---one dollar for each ratable poll of the previous year and an additional \$233 for current expenses. The library was at first housed in the town hall, but in 1868 the town constructed a \$30,000 building to accomodate the growing collection, then containing about 10,000 volumes.<sup>59</sup>

The transformation of Brookline's schools in the post-1850 period into the best-funded and best-equipped system in the state provides perhaps the most dramatic evidence of the relationship between the rise of commuter power and the

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<sup>58</sup> Brighton, Rules and Regulations for the Board of Trustees and for the Use of the Holton Library (Boston, 1864) 5; Boston City Directory, 1864; U. S. Census, 1860, Population Schedule, Brighton; Winship, vol. 1: 119-123, 187 and 139-40; Winship, vol. 2: 53.

<sup>59</sup> Bolton, 126-127; Walter Muir Whitehill, The Boston Public Library: A Centennial History (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956) 47; Bolton, 126; Curtis, 231-232.

redefinition of the public interest. Prior to the coming of the new commuter element, Brookline's schools had been hobbled by a relatively conservative electorate which saw the mission of the public schools as confined to education for literacy. Petitions for new or improved school facilities often faced stiff opposition in town meetings.<sup>60</sup>

School spending in Brookline lagged well behind Brighton's until 1844, when it began a relatively modest advance. Only in the 1850s, however, after the arrival of large numbers of commuters, did the large-scale spending begin that quickly placed Brookline in the forefront of public education in Massachusetts.<sup>61</sup>

In the early 1840s Brookline initiated a modest program of school improvements. Existing school facilities were repaired, Brookline High School was established in 1844, and teachers were made more accountable to the School Committee. School expenditures increased from \$1,394.80 in 1840-41 to \$2,036.24 in 1844-45, or by 46 percent (an increase of less than 10 percent per year). While this spending raised Brookline to the 10th rank among Massachusetts towns in school spending by 1844, it did not reflect a truly deep commitment to the common school reform program.<sup>62</sup>

Prior to the 1850s, Brookline drew its school committee members primarily from two elements of its population: farmers and Protestant clergymen. Ministers

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<sup>60</sup> Harriet F. Woods, Historical Sketches of Brookline, Massachusetts (Boston, 1874) 88; Brookline, Town Records, vol. 1: 592-593.

<sup>61</sup> Massachusetts, Annual Reports of the State Board of Education, 1840-1850, Statistical Appendices.

<sup>62</sup> Brookline, Town Records, vol. 1: 21 and 189.

filled most of the seats, but it was the town's farmers who actually controlled school policy through their domination of town meetings. As in Brighton, the less educated deferred to the local intelligentsia in choosing School Committee members. Rev. John Pierce of the First Church held a seat on the Brookline School Committee for a half century before his retirement in 1847. Rev. William H. Shailer of the Baptist Church and Rev. Joseph Haven, Jr. of the Congregational Church also sat on the panel in the 1840s.<sup>63</sup> In contrast to Brighton, however, where School Committee members and business leaders subscribed to the common school program with equal enthusiasm, if not always identical goals, Brookline's farmers were less supportive of school reform than its clergymen. The common school rhetoric that appeared in School Committee reports (written by the clerical majority) was therefore rarely matched by a solid financial commitment from those who controlled the purse strings.<sup>64</sup>

The town's farmers were sometimes obliged to step in and rescue the schools from the educational radicalism of the clergy. In March 1840, for example, a town meeting temporarily expanded the School Committee by nine members (six of whom were farmers), thus relegating the clergy to a minority status. After studying Brookline's school situation, the expanded panel recommended only a few modest revisions of the school calendar.<sup>65</sup>

This farmer domination of Brookline school politics was made clear again in April 1841, when town meeting chose a committee of eleven "to investigate the

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<sup>63</sup> Kingman, 818 and 820; Brookline, Town Records, vol. 1: 19-288.

<sup>64</sup> Brookline, Town Records, vol 1: 50.

<sup>65</sup> Brookline, Town Records, vol. 1: 20-26.

subject of establishing a classical school" (high school), and appointed seven farmers to the body. Proposals to establish high schools were initiated in both Brighton and Brookline in 1841. However, while Brighton gave its high school proposal unanimous and prompt approval, the Brookline committee dragged its feet for many long months, only to recommend in the end that the question be deferred "in consequence of the indisposition of the chairman."<sup>66</sup>

Brookline established a high school in 1843, but gave it only modest financial backing.<sup>67</sup> In urging its establishment, the School Committee had complained that many residents were put to the trouble of enrolling their children in private schools both in and out of the town. "For several years," it noted, "there have been individuals who had felt the need of such a school and who for want of it had been obliged to send their children to a private school in town, or to send them away from home, at considerable expense at the very age when they especially need to be under the parent's watchfulness and care." While Brookline High School attracted a fairly high number of students (some ninety by the end of its first year of operation), the owners of the great estates were not among its patrons.

The serious deficiencies that existed in the Brookline schools before the new commuter element launched its successful drive for reform were outlined in the School Committee's 1849 annual report. The town's school attendance rate, the report noted, was one of the poorest in the state. Brookline stood 290th in attendance among the state's 315 towns. Among the twenty-four towns of

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<sup>66</sup> Brookline, Town Records, vol. 1: 48.

<sup>67</sup> Brookline, Town Records, vol. 1: 89; Curtis, 225-26.

Norfolk County, it ranked second to last.<sup>68</sup> Brighton, by contrast, stood twenty-sixth in the state. "No town nearer than Concord stands so high, and that is eighteenth," the Brighton School Committee reported in 1850. All places in our immediate vicinity are far below."<sup>69</sup>

As the Brookline School Committee noted in its own defense, "part of the explanation for the poor attendance record is probably to be found in the fact that a large number of our children attend private school, either in the town, or in Boston."<sup>70</sup> We have taken note of the heavy reliance the elite placed on private education. Few elite families sent their children to Brookline High School even later in the century after its standards had risen appreciably. A list of Brookline college graduates who also attended Brookline High School, prepared by Bradford Kingman in the 1880s, contains not a single Bowditch, Gardner, Sargent, Amory, Lawrence, Lee, Goddard, Perkins, Appleton, Atkinson, or Fisher, the families that owned the largest Brookline estates at mid-century.<sup>71</sup>

While Brookline had moved to the top position in per capita spending on public schools by the late 1840s, major educational reform came only after 1850 as a direct consequence of the new commuter influx. In 1850-51 (a year in which the state's top ranking towns in per capita public school spending were Brookline,

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<sup>68</sup> Brookline, Town Records, vol. 1: 114.

<sup>69</sup> Brighton, Annual Report of the School Committee for 1849-50 (Cambridge, 1850) 24.

<sup>70</sup> Brookline, Report of the School Committee for 1848-49, (Boston, 1849) 12. The school attendance rank was calculated on the basis of the percentage of all school aged children ages 4 to 16 attending the public schools, and thus included those enrolled in private schools, both in and outside of the town.

<sup>71</sup> Kingman, 830-832.

Boston and Brighton) the State Board of Education felt obliged to note that "the amount appropriated by Brookline...in proportion to its last valuation, is a smaller fraction of one percent than is appropriated by many of the small and interior towns of the state." In the following year, the State Board introduced an additional schedule to its statistical appendix which ranked Massachusetts' towns "according to the percentage of their taxable property appropriated to the support of public schools." This table showed Brookline as ranking 319th out of 321 towns in Massachusetts. Brighton ranked a comparatively high 88th.<sup>72</sup>

The heavy investment in public education that Brookline made in the 1850s met two needs. It satisfied the demands the new commuter element was making for better schools and it equipped the town to exert more effective social control over its burgeoning Irish-Catholic population. The presence of this large, working-class, immigrant element (comprising about one-third of its residents), threatened Brookline's elite status. If the town was to maintain its reputation as the preferred Boston suburb, it would have to both confine the Irish residentially and restrain them psychologically. Brookline's educational leaders looked to the schools to promote docility and deference among both the younger generation and their parents.

The 1849 School Committee report urged that the town endeavor to attract more students "by providing better accommodations, larger, more convenient, more pleasant and tasteful school-houses, larger play-grounds, and a sufficient number of instructors so that the schools shall not be crowded, nor

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<sup>72</sup> Massachusetts, Fifteenth Annual Report of the State Board of Education (Boston, 1852) Statistical Appendix; Massachusetts, Sixteenth Annual Report of the State Board of Education (Boston, 1853) Statistical Appendix.

the teachers obliged to devote less of time and attention to each pupil than might be desirable."

In identifying the system's many deficiencies, however, the report singled out the north district school in Brookline Village, one of the town's three primaries, for particular censure. Since it was nearest heavily populated Brookline Village, where the new commuter element and the Irish lived in clearly differentiated, but nonetheless adjacent neighborhoods, this schoolhouse served a socially mixed population comprising nearly sixty percent of the town's primary students.

The arrangement in and about the house are not as they should be. There is nothing inviting or pleasant in the aspect of the building. Its situation is unfortunate. It has neither beauty nor comeliness, that any child should be attracted by it. It is too small for the accomodation of even its present number of pupils. Nor has it such a playground as we could wish. We would respectfully suggest to the people of Brookline that it will be desirable, at no distant day, to provide some better accomodations for this school, if they would have it what it might and should be.<sup>73</sup>

This neglect of the North Primary School was almost certainly related to the large number of "foreign children" it accomodated. Between one-third and three-eighths of its students were foreign-born. "A very large proportion both of the absences, and of the tardiness, falls upon this class of scholars," the School Committee reported, "and their irregular attendance is spoken of by the teacher as a great drawback upon the progress of the school."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Brookline, Report of the School Committee for 1848-49 (Boston, 1849) 24.

<sup>74</sup> Brookline, Report of the School Committee for 1848-49, 4-5.

While the conditions at the North Primary were the worst in Brookline, the facilities problem was not confined to this one schoolhouse. The 1849 School Committee report also described the South West Primary, located in a more affluent section of town, in uncomplimentary terms---as "quite unworthy of the town, dingy, dirty, ill-placed, ill-constructed, and ill-kept, not for the training of youthful minds in sound learning, good morals, and good manners."<sup>75</sup>

Major educational change, as has been noted, came only in the mid-1850s, in the wake of the huge influx of commuters. Brookline's public education expenditure increased spectacularly in the late 1850s. In the 1854-59 period, Brookline built five new school buildings, including a high school. Its total expenditure for public education in this six year period amounted to \$137,237 at a time when Brighton's was spending only \$50,302 on its schools.<sup>76</sup>

The 1853-54 Brookline School Committee report was the first to identify the town's school problems comprehensively. It also offered a body of recommendations for reform, which the town immediately adopted. The economy was changing, the report noted, and Brookline's schools had to keep pace.

The demand for a thorough training of the intellectual faculties was never so great as at the present day. The rapid progress of the community in all the departments of practical life---in trade and commerce, manufactures, agriculture, and the mechanic arts, calls for a corresponding expansion in its system of education. Whole classes in our community, who, not a generation ago, would have been content to earn their living by unskilled

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<sup>75</sup> Brookline, Report of the School Committee for 1848-49, 13.

<sup>76</sup> Brookline, Annual Reports of the School Committee, 1854-1859; Brighton, Annual Reports of Receipts and Expenditures, 1854-59.

labor, are now thrust from the lower market and forced to add knowledge and intelligence to the labor of their hands. Surely we should not regret this state of things, but it behooves us to provide for it.<sup>77</sup>

The 1853-54 report also called for the reorganization of Brookline High School, describing it as "nothing more at present than a grammar school, in which a few advanced studies are partially and imperfectly taught." While some steps had already been taken, much remained to be done if it was to be transformed into a modern high school. The Secretary of the Committee had "visited a number of the best organized and most successful High Schools in the vicinity, taken notes on their operations, and procured an outline of their course of study," as a first step toward comprehensive reform.<sup>78</sup>

The 1853-54 report also described the compensation offered Brookline's teachers, especially at the primary level, as seriously inadequate. "The salaries of the teachers of Brookline are not so large as those paid in several adjoining towns; and, in our opinion, are by no means large enough," it declared.

Does it become us to boast of our enlightened zeal in the cause of education, so long as the wages we pay them for their high service are not equal to those of a good cook? Yet such is the literal fact. The increased expense of living in our community is an additional reason for increasing the salaries of all our teachers; and your committee have, therefore, made provision for such increase in their estimate of the expenses of the coming year.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Brookline, Report of the School Committee for 1853-54 (Boston, 1854) 9-10.

<sup>78</sup> Brookline, Report of the School Committee for 1853-54, 11.

<sup>79</sup> Brookline, Report of the School Committee for 1853-54, 11-12.

Finally, the School Committee pointed to the town's low public education expenditure relative to its tax base. "In a table appended to the Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education for the present year, which gives the percentage of taxable property appropriated by each town to educational purposes," it noted, "Brookline stands as she did last year, last, or last but one, upon the list."<sup>80</sup>

The town responded to this call for school reform with great vigor. Expenditure on public education leaped from \$6,848.16 in 1853-54 to an incredible \$34,408.15 in 1854-55 (58 percent of the total budget). In the opening paragraph of the 1854-55 the School Committee felt justified in,

congratulat[ing] their fellow-citizens on the progress that has been made since their last Report, in providing suitable buildings for the accomodation of their public schools. During the past two years, there have been built three handsome two-story wooden schoolhouses, containing seats for nearly three hundred students; and a large central brick Grammar School, with seats for two-hundred and forty more.... The town has raised itself at once, by this act, from one of the lowest positions in the Commonwealth to a high and honorable place. From expending less on its schools, in proportion to its wealth, than any other town but one in the State, it will this year rank among the foremost for liberality in the great cause of public education. Few instances can probably be found where an evil, once fully understood, has been more promptly remedied.<sup>81</sup>

Also worthy of note were changes in the composition of the School Committee. When large-scale reform was initiated in 1853 and 1854, the

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<sup>80</sup> Brookline, Report of the School Committee for 1853-54, 12.

<sup>81</sup> Brookline, Treasurer's Reports of Receipts and Expenditures, 1853-55; Brookline, Report of the School Committee for 1854-55 (Boston, 1855) 3.

Brookline School Committee consisted of five members, four of them Protestant clergymen. It had long been traditional practice in New England to elect ministers to preside over the public schools. Recognizing the critical role schools played in shaping moral values, the clergy were viewed as better qualified than laymen to sit on school committees.<sup>82</sup> The proliferation of Brookline's Protestant denominations in the post-1820 period (there were four by 1853) and concern to give representation to these new Protestant churches no doubt played a role in perpetuating ministerial involvement in school affairs.

Reinforcing the clergy's role in the mid-1850s was the the rise of fervent nativist sentiment in Massachusetts.<sup>83</sup> What better way to combat Catholic influence than by placing the schools under the direction of Protestant clergymen. The coming of the Irish deeply disturbed the Protestant middle class, a group growing in importance in Brookline in the 1850s. Many of these men had but recently risen in social rank and feared the loss of their new found status. On that account, as Oscar Handlin has written, they were the more determined to "keep the gulf between themselves and the Irish as wide as possible."<sup>84</sup> If the Brahmin element was less militant in its anti-Irish sentiments, that was owing perhaps to their greater isolation. Brookline's new commuter element, living close to Brookline Village, had more occasion for contact with the Irish, even sharing a local schoolhouse with this Catholic, immigrant, working-class element.

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<sup>82</sup> Woods, 95.

<sup>83</sup> Brookline, Report of the School Committee for the Year 1853-54, 2; Kingman, 807-823.

<sup>84</sup> Handlin, 219-221.

Not so with the Brahmins who lived on their estates in the Gardner Hill and Longwood/ Cottage Farm districts and sent their children to private schools.<sup>85</sup>

This may help to explain why clergymen continued to be chosen to fill the majority of Brookline's School Committee seats well into the 1850s. Candidates for School Committee seats tended to run on slates. The five members elected to the Brookline School Committee in 1853, for example, each received between 91 and 88 votes, while the five candidates whom the voters rejected a relatively uniform 39 and 35 votes apiece. While there were no commuters among the successful candidates, three of the five losers, a drug merchant, a civil engineer, and an attorney were commuters. Protestant clergymen continued to win a majority of seats on the Brookline School Committee in 1854 and 1855, in a period when nativist sentiment was particularly strong in Massachusetts. Only in 1856 did this pattern begin to break up.<sup>86</sup> By 1859 the composition of the now eight-member Brookline School Committee had been radically altered, the body then containing only one clergyman, an Episopalian. A merchant, a manufacturer, and a clerk, two physicians, and a gentleman farmer made up the balance of the panel. Three of the eight members of this committee were now commuters. The marked decline in the influence of the clergy, on the one hand, and the rising influence of the commuter element, on the other, was consistent with the general pattern of increasing commuter influence in Brookline in the 1850 to 1865 period.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Brookline, Town Records, vol. 1: 423, 460, and 499-500.

<sup>86</sup> Brookline, Report of the School Committee for 1858-59 (Boston, 1859) 2; U. S. Census, 1860, Population Schedule, Brookline.

While the commuter element did not actually control the Brookline School Committee until the end of the decade of the 1850s, it made its influence felt by other means. A March 14, 1855 town meeting, for example, stipulated that future school committee annual reports contain more information about the state of the schools, including the number of students attending each facility, average attendance, how often school committee members paid visits to school houses, how many examinations of students each member conducted, and how many school committee meetings were held "and attended by what members of the committee."<sup>87</sup>

A key factor in attracting commuters to Brookline was the relative isolation of the town's foreign-born population from its native-born population. The Anglo-Protestant majority held the Irish in barely disguised contempt. They despised them for their poverty, lower class habits, and "superstitious" religious practices. Anti-Irish and anti-Catholic biases were particularly intense in Massachusetts in the 1840s and 1850s, at the very time that Brookline was assuming the character of a commuter suburb. Physical conflict between native and foreign-born residents was commonplace in the state's cities. In the late 1850s a nativist mob burned homes and churches in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Despite such hostility, by sheer force of numbers, the Irish succeeded in pushing the native-born out of many of the state's principal population centers.<sup>88</sup> Brookline's Anglo-Protestant element, however, succeeded where others had failed. No violence

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<sup>87</sup> Brookline, Town Records, vol. 1: 502-503.

<sup>88</sup> William V. Shannon, The American Irish: A Political and Social Portrait (New York: MacMillan, 1963) 46.

occurred in Brookline; none was required. Brookline dealt with its Irish population by restricting it to a well-defined enclave.

Part of Brookline's school reform program involved the segregation of foreign students. As previously noted, the residents of the Brookline Village area, native-born and immigrant alike, were at first served by the same district school house. In the early 1850s, however, the town established a separate school, the Village Primary School in Brookline Village, for the town's burgeoning Irish population. While Brookline town records nowhere acknowledge a segregative intent, such can be inferred from the language of the School Committee reports of the period. In 1853-54, for example, the committee praised Miss Emily Reed, the Village Primary School's teacher, "for the manner in which she fulfills her very laborious task. She adapts her teaching with great skill to the peculiar wants of her pupils, and none in the town are more faithfully or thoroughly taught."<sup>89</sup> (emphasis mine) In 1854-55 the town carried the segregation of immigrant children a step further by establishing the Village Intermediate School, thereby creating a second level of ethnically separate schooling.<sup>90</sup> This school was designed to accommodate "a class of scholars too old for the Primary Schools, but not sufficiently advanced in their studies for the Grammar School."<sup>91</sup> Since few if any Irish students attended high school, such measures had the practical effect of isolating Irish Catholic students from the native-born population at a time when nativist sentiment was extremely strong. Without this segregation, the Brookline

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<sup>89</sup> Brookline, Report of the School Committee for 1853-54, 6.

<sup>90</sup> Brookline, Report of the School Committee for 1854-55, 5.

<sup>91</sup> Brookline, Report of the School Committee for 1858-59, 10.

schools would probably have lost much of their growing appeal to the commuter element.<sup>92</sup>

All of the towns around Boston experienced a substantial increase in their immigrant populations in the late 1840s. As early as 1855, Brookline contained the highest concentration of foreign-born residents outside of Boston, with the single exception of Roxbury, the city's closest neighbor. Out of 3,737 residents, 1,320, or 35.3 percent, were foreign-born, and of these, 1,142, or 30.6 percent were of Irish birth. Despite its more diverse economy and much stronger industrial base, Brighton attracted fewer foreigners than Brookline. In 1855, only 697 of Brighton's 2,895 residents, 24.1 percent, were of Irish birth.<sup>93</sup>

At first glance, Brookline's high Irish population may seem anomalous, since the town offered little prospect of industrial or commercial employment. One does not have to look far for an explanation, however.

The Irish were the least skilled and the most impoverished immigrant group to enter the country up to that time. The vast majority had been tenant farmers with just enough ground for a cottage and a small potato field. Ireland experienced several failures of its potato crop, its dietary mainstay, in the late 1840s and 1850s. The potato rot, which made its first appearance in 1845, subjected the country to a succession of miseries that has few parallels in modern history.

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<sup>92</sup> Brookline, Report of the School Committee for 1857-58 (Boston, 1858) 8.

<sup>93</sup> Massachusetts State Census, 1855, Brookline; Massachusetts State Census, 1855, Brighton; Handlin, 244.

The years 1849 to 1851 were the most severe for famine-stricken Ireland; one quarter of its people being displaced. After falling off somewhat in the late 1850s, the massive emigration revived with the reappearance of the potato rot in 1863. By 1865 some two and a half million Irish had fled their homeland, most emigrating to Britain, Canada, and the United States.<sup>94</sup>

The potato famine emigrants did not come to America voluntarily. They fled Ireland to escape starvation. J. L. L. F. Warren, a reform-minded Brighton horticulturalist who had just returned from a visit to Ireland, described the conditions he found there to the people of Brighton in February 1847:

It has been my painful duty to examine and witness the intense suffering, the absolute starvation of thousands! And as I return to our happy and prosperous land, so highly favored by heaven, I feel it a solemn duty to do what I can to awaken a proper sympathy for our fellow men, though they may belong to a foreign nation and reside across the Atlantic Ocean---and most truly gratifying to my own heart would it be to see my native village awake and my friends and neighbors join to do what we can to "Feed the Hungry" and "Clothe the Naked" believing as I do that "God will Bless us Liberally" if we do our duty in this respect.<sup>95</sup>

The potato famine Irish were not only desperately poor, they were also largely unskilled. A disproportionately high number were young and unmarried. Irish females were thus as eager to procure employment as were Irish males.

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<sup>94</sup> Handlin, 44-53; Thomas Gallagher, Paddy's Lament, Ireland, 1846-1847: Prelude to Hatred (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982) 3-90; Shannon, 1-26; John Bodnar, The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985) 17-18.

<sup>95</sup> An abolitionist, J. L. L. F. Warren was a leader of the Massachusetts Liberty Party. Brighton Town Records: Box 4, 25 February 1847; John B. Pickard, ed., The Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975) 547-548.

This vast influx of cheap labor, of course, weakened the bargaining position of the native-born element, which in turn strengthened nativist sentiments.<sup>96</sup>

Irish immigrants were drawn to Brookline in unusually large numbers, not by jobs opportunities in industry and commerce, but rather by the employment opportunities offered by the town's developing suburban economy---employment as domestic servants, groundskeepers, and in the construction and maintenance of housing.

Brookline's Irish population fell, in fact, into two distinct categories: those in service to the town's wealthy residents, mostly young women, and those who resided in Irish-headed households, mostly situated in the area east of Brookline Village, the town's only Irish neighborhood, popularly known as "the Marsh."

By 1860 Brookline's population stood at 5,164. Persons of Irish birth then comprised 1,512, or 29.3 percent of the total, a slight decrease from 1855. There were 778 households in the town altogether. Three hundred and twenty-six of these (43.2 percent of all households) were headed by immigrants and 291 (89.2 percent of immigrant households and 37.4 of all households) were headed by Irish immigrants.<sup>97</sup>

The number of Brookline households which included persons of Irish birth, however, was much higher---617 out of 778, or 79.3 percent. Thus four out of every five Brookline households included one or more persons of Irish birth. This diffusion of Irish servants, gardeners, coachmen, and resident laborers should not be interpreted, however, as reflecting social openness in Brookline. While persons of Irish birth were present in most households headed by native-born

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<sup>96</sup> Handlin, 73-74.

<sup>97</sup> U. S Census, 1860, Population Schedule, Brookline.

Americans, they occupied a distinctly subordinate position which reinforced rather than diminished the town's class and ethnic consciousness.<sup>98</sup>

Altogether 680 of Brookline's Irish-born residents (45 percent) lived in households headed by persons of native birth. Women made up three-quarters of this huge domestic work force. It was here that Brookline's upper class encountered the Irish most directly. The resulting relationship evidenced deep tensions. There were advantages to domestic service (most notably a clean, healthful environment and free room and board), but life for the servant was far from ideal. She was obliged to work long hours for low wages in a socially rigid atmosphere, and was expected to show her employer unfailing courtesy and deference, and to keep her opinions strictly to herself. Irish servants were often unjustly accused of theft and pilfering or subjected to ethnic and religious slurs. Employers most feared the possible moral contagion of their children from contact with "heretical" Catholic ideas. As Dennis Ryan wrote in his social history of the Boston Irish, "Domestics were constantly berated for 'raids on the larder,' and for taking household items. Newspaper editorials in 1852 charged Irish maids with stealing sugar, tea, pies, and even coal from their employers to help needy relatives. Some did pilfer; others were accused unjustly."<sup>99</sup>

Brookline's Irish population was skewed from a gender standpoint, females comprising 60.3 percent of the whole. This imbalance did not apply to the Marsh (the Irish enclave near Brookline Village), however, where males made up 51.9 percent of the population, only to the town's Irish population as a

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<sup>98</sup> U. S. Census, 1860, Population Schedule, Brookline.

<sup>99</sup> Ryan, 43.

whole. The gender imbalance was thus a direct product of the disproportionate number of Brookline Irish (greater than that of any other Boston suburb) in domestic employment.<sup>100</sup>

The Marsh had a number of important distinguishing characteristics. It occupied relatively little space. Two major roadways, a river and railroad tracks set it apart from the rest of the town. The Muddy River, intersected by Brookline Avenue, bordered it on the east (proximity to this tidal estuary exposed the residents of the enclave to the hazards of epidemic disease and flooding). Washington Street (the main road to Boston) lay to the south. The Brookline Branch Railroad bounded the quarter on the west. The Irish were thus near the railroad, near the commercial center of the town, Brookline Village, and relatively near Boston, but they were also effectively isolated from the rest of Brookline.<sup>101</sup>

As the years went by the Irish district expanded in a southwesterly direction into an area called Whiskey Point, but the town's Irish community continued to be highly concentrated.<sup>102</sup> As late as 1870, eighty percent of Irish households in Brookline were located in a single contiguous neighborhood extending from Brookline Avenue and the banks of the Muddy River in a southwesterly direction out to Bradley's Hill, about three quarters of a mile west of Brookline Village. Through the heart of this neighborhood ran the tracks of the Brookline Branch and Charles River Railroads. Most of the remaining twenty

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<sup>100</sup> U. S. Census, 1860, Population Schedule, Brookline.

<sup>101</sup> Jones, maps VII and VIII; G. M. Hopkins, Atlas of Brookline (1874), Plates F, G and H: The Brookline, Jamaica Plain and West Roxbury Directory for 1868 (Boston, 1868).

<sup>102</sup> Karr, "The Evolution of an Elite Suburb," 180.

percent of Irish households were located in the south central section of the town. Twenty-five of the ninety-seven families living outside of the contiguous area were headed by gardeners, coachmen, farm laborers or other categories of domestic workers, the rest by laborers, with most employed by the owners of Brookline's great estates. The Brookline town directories for 1868 and 1870 are full of entries such as the following: "John McGittrick, gardener, Jas. M. Codman's, Walnut," which evidence this link between these more remote Irish households and the owners of the great estates.<sup>103</sup> The proximity of many of the outlying Irish households to the Chestnut Hill Reservoir, a huge public works project then under construction on the nearby Brighton boundary, may also have contributed to the migration of Irish to this locality.

The members of Brookline's social elite sometimes viewed the Irish in quasi-feudal terms. In her memoirs of mid-century Brookline, Frances Rollins Morse, granddaughter of Henry Lee, represented them as a contented and deferential people.

Most of the Irish who came here were working men---many of them farm-laborers---bringing with them the familiarity of centuries with the earth we live on and its properties, and with the care and use of animals, and bringing also the instinctive respect for the gentry---the owner of the land or the squire---which made them turn to him as to a higher authority.

Conversely, Morse viewed Brookline's landed gentry, men like her grandfather, as the natural arbiters of such disputes as might arise among the rough-and-tumble Irish.

The first fight between grown men that I ever saw was one afternoon when Grandfather and Grandmother were driving through [Brookline] village...and

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<sup>103</sup> The Brookline, Jamaica Plain and West Roxbury Directory for 1868, 59.

came upon an excited crowd which broke up as the old carriage was driven slowly into it and both disputants, one with a very bloody mouth, came to the carriage door in an appeal to Grandfather---and, as I recall it, a very few words seemed to settle the dispute and the crowd melted away.<sup>104</sup>

The concentration of most of Brookline's Irish population in a single small corner of the town contrasted sharply with the highly diffused residential pattern that developed in neighboring Brighton, where no single concentration of Irish households comprised more than twenty percent of the whole. This startling demographic dissimilarity reflected the different roles the Irish played in the economic life of the two communities. In Brighton, Irish households were to be found in four major concentrations and a multitude of minor ones. The Irish resided wherever commercial activities offered job opportunities, and such opportunities existed in many locations in the market town. The largest single concentration of Irish lived on the south side of Washington Street near Brighton Center, close to the site of the weekly cattle market. Another sizeable concentration was to be found in the eastern part of town, along Cambridge and North Beacon Streets, near the Allston depot, several slaughterhouses, the Southard Oil Factory, and other industrial establishments. A third such neighborhood existed in the Barry's Corner area, at the intersection of Western Avenue and North Harvard Street, close to the Charles River, a district where rope walks, fertilizer works, varnish works, lumber yards, and other industrial enterprises provided many employment opportunities. Finally, there was Brighton Corners (North Brighton), the community's second largest commercial

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<sup>104</sup> Francis Rollins Morse, Henry and Mary Lee: Letters and Journals with Other Family Letters, 1802-1860 (Boston: privately printed, 1926) 302.

center, with its hotels, stores, and slaughterhouses. Both of the latter neighborhoods were also relatively near Brighton's principal market gardening establishments.<sup>105</sup>

The Brookline town meeting proceedings for the 1850 to 1870 period reveal little about the conditions in Brookline's Irish Catholic neighborhood. The town simply ignored the largely ghettoized Irish. The fact that it reduced its level of support for the poor at the very time when that group's need for assistance was greatest reflects this disposition to neglect the Irish. Appropriations for the poor fell by 40.9 percent in the decade of the 1850s, when conditions in the Marsh were at their worst. In contrast to Brighton, which established an almshouse as early as 1818, and invested in new facilities in 1861, Brookline did almost nothing to assist its poorest residents. Not until the early 1880s did the affluent suburb take its first serious steps to establish a poor house.<sup>106</sup>

Fortunately there are other sources that provide glimpses of the conditions prevailing in Brookline's cramped Irish neighborhood. In 1861 the Board of Selectmen cited the potential dangers the Marsh posed to the public health of Brookline, but without mentioning that it was a poor immigrant neighborhood.

We would also call the attention of the citizens to the low lands near the Pearl-place Schoolhouse; and would suggest that great detriment to the health of the public will arise therefrom, unless measures be taken to prevent the flooding of that whole section of the town at extreme high tides.

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<sup>105</sup> G.M. Hopkins, Atlas of The County of Suffolk, Massachusetts, plates C, H, L and F; Massachusetts Census, 1855, Brighton; U. S. Census, 1860 and 1870, Population Schedules, Brighton.

<sup>106</sup> Curtis, 248; Brookline, Treasurer's Reports of Receipts and Expenditures, 1850-1859.

Pearl and Davis Places lay at the center of Brookline's Irish ghetto. In 1870, the ethnic composition of these two streets was over 98 percent Irish. The vast majority of its workforce consisted of unskilled laborers, many of whom were recent immigrants. An analysis of the 1870 Brookline tax valuation list (which references street locations), shows that only one-fifth of the area's ninety-nine resident taxpayers were homeowners and that these homes had an average value of less than \$600 and sat on parcels of land which averaged only one-sixth acre.<sup>107</sup> The 1861 report noted that the town had done little to protect the neighborhood from inundation by the tidal Muddy River or from potential outbreaks of infectious diseases. It took particular note of Davis Place.

Davis Place, leading from Pearl Place, has never been graded; and we would recommend that it be done to nearly the height of the Mill-dam Road. In our opinion, it would be wise for the town to make some appropriation so as to assist to carry out the improvements. We would also recommend, that, for the further protection of public health, the proprietors of the flats in the rear of Davis Place, be ordered to fill up the same with clean gravel, to such a height that it shall not be overflowed by the highest tides.<sup>108</sup>

Brookline acquired its first newspaper, the Transcript, in October, 1870. It was in its pages, in late 1870 and early 1871, that the conditions of the Marsh were called to the public's attention in explicit fashion for the first time. The issue was raised in a letter dated December 24, 1870, and signed "A," probably written by Robert Amory, a physician who maintained an office in Brookline Village near the Irish quarter.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Brookline, Tax List for 1870 (Brookline, 1870).

<sup>108</sup> Brookline, Selectmen's Report for 1860-61, 27-28.

<sup>109</sup> Kingman, 883; The Brookline, Jamaica Plain and West Roxbury

It is well known ["A" wrote] that on the "marsh" live poor and desperate widows, and also laborers, in miserable hovels. To prevent an extension of this nuisance and pest-hole, well known to all the physicians of this town, I would suggest that at the annual election of the town, a Board be elected to act under the General Statutes and also under the By-Laws of the town.

Noting that the amount appropriated by the town for the relief of its poor was "insignificant," and that the Selectmen (who served both as the Board of Health and as the Overseers of the Poor) "have no time to act systematically with reference to the poor, and cannot consider as a Board of Health, a general policy for the prevention of disease and vice," "A" urged Brookline to separate the agencies.

"A" claimed to be deeply offended by the spectacle of poor people begging door-to-door in elite Brookline. It embarrassed him to have to refuse their appeals for assistance. The time had come for a more systematic approach to poor relief, he asserted. "Will our town not do her duty but allow either of two disgraces, viz., to compel its citizens to shut the door upon every beggar, or else run the risk of being swindled, because they are too tender hearted to resist an appeal."

The problem had been growing worse for some time [he continued]. There was a time when poverty was unknown in Brookline, but owing to our increase in population, and the high rent of the city, many persons live in our town, who cannot by their own work support their families; and there are others who live in the town who are too lazy to support their families, as some of these last class as well as the first have been to my door to beg.

A more professionally run poor relief board, "A" implied, would be able to distinguish between the deserving poor and those who were simply too lazy or too morally degenerate to live productive lives.

The rise in the number of Brookline's poor also increased the danger of Brookline experiencing outbreaks of contagious diseases which might well spread to the general population.

Not many days ago ["A" noted by way of example] a poor wretched drunkard was found by the police lying on the ground in an outhouse, and medical assistance being afforded, he was found to have erisipelas. He was immediately removed to the poor house and died on the day of his admission. The police officer contracted erisipelas and was laid up for a fortnight. If the town had appointed a special and responsible Board, and paid them for their work, this evil might have been less, or might not have existed.

The establishment of a separate, professionally staffed Board of Health would help alleviate the danger of outbreaks of contagious disease, "A" continued, but that body, to be truly effective would have to exert more comprehensive control over unhealthy conditions than had Brookline's Selectmen in past years.

Not a year ago many Irish families were removed from a healthy location on top of a hill, to a dismal swamp. If care is not taken, this swamp will become a pest-hole from improper drainage and want of ventilation. Now, let us examine the report of the Selectmen of the town, in regard to the poor. Two lines and a half dispenses with the whole subject, and no one is any wiser for it. Let us take pains to look after the poor and the health of our town, and we shall then be more prosperous, and shall not be guilty of want of charity.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Brookline Transcript, 24 December 1870: 2.

The Transcript raised the issue again a few months later. Referring to the 1870 report of the Massachusetts Board of Health, it observed,

We are sorry to find our town alluded to in a somewhat uncomplimentary manner, or rather certain portions of the town. If, however, anyone doubts the truth or the necessity for such allusions we would recommend him to explore "the marsh" some fine day, or take a stroll through Sewall Street, that portion now styled "Hart's Content." We think housekeepers who have visited these localities are not in the least surprised of the continued sickness of "Bridget's sisters," or for that matter her cousins.<sup>111</sup>

In 1871 the Massachusetts State Board of Health's annual report quoted an unnamed local correspondent (possibly Dr. Amory) to the effect that Brookline contained

three or four filthy locations occupied by foreigners, and where the houses are crowded with people who pay no regard to cleanliness; their slops and refuse are for the most part thrown upon the ground---their pigsties are offensive. In contrast to all this, we know that the greater portion of the people of Brookline enjoy all the comforts of life, and there is, perhaps, no town in the state where so large a number are in possession of all which may be supposed to promote health and long life---beautiful estates are to be found throughout its territory.<sup>112</sup>

The contrast between the Irish enclave and other sections of the town is suggested by the following passage, taken from the "Health of Towns" section of the State Board's 1873 annual report:

There are two brooks [besides Muddy River] running through Brookline, which are practically sewers, but many of the foreigners living on their banks use the waters for cullinary purposes. Parts of Brookline are well-provided

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<sup>111</sup> Brookline Transcript, 22 April 1871: 2.

<sup>112</sup> Massachusetts, Second Annual Report of the State Board of Health, January, 1871 (Boston, 1871) 122-123.

with sewers, many of which have been recently built and in the best manner. They discharge into Muddy River.<sup>113</sup>

In April 1871, the Ladies Industrial Society of Brookline, in its first annual report, acknowledged that the town had ignored its poor: "The needs have been greater, the applications more numerous and earnest than we had expected, and the oft-repeated remark 'no poor in Brookline' we find to be only words." The report went on to note, "Our society has been criticized, and doubts of its utility expressed, because we give so much work and consequent help to the Catholic Irish."<sup>114</sup> The Ladies Industrial Union was founded in 1870 by the women of various religious denominations. It devoted itself to providing employment as seamstresses to "deserving and needy women" of Brookline. Six women sat on its board of directors.<sup>115</sup>

The approach Brookline and Brighton took to law enforcement in this period provides another study in contrasts. Law enforcement problems in both communities frequently involved outsiders, but whereas commercially-oriented Brighton needed and welcomed transients, residentially-oriented Brookline regarded them (many on their way to or from Brighton) as a nuisance and sought to regulate their activities. In 1857 the Brookline Board of Selectmen asked the town for authority to establish a special police force to deal with two problems:

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<sup>113</sup> Massachusetts, Fourth Annual Report of the State Board of Health, January, 1873 (Boston, 1873) 452.

<sup>114</sup> Brookline Transcript, 15 April 1871: 2.

<sup>115</sup> The Catholic member, Mrs. Gustavus M. Finotti, was the wife of the Italian Consul to Boston and the sister-in-law of Father Joseph Finotti, Brookline's Catholic priest. Brookline Transcript, 18 March 1871: 2.

"furious driving on Washington Street, through Roxbury to Brighton...to the consequent disturbance of the public" and trespassing---"the annoyance to which many of our citizens are subjected, in the summer and fall, by having their fields and gardens infested, on the sabbath and at other times, by lawless persons from the neighboring cities, who...take their fruit, and commit other outrages."<sup>116</sup> Both problems threatened Brookline's character as an edenic retreat for commuters. The town promptly approved the request, and in 1858 Brookline's Board of Selectmen was able to report that it believed the police had "prevented many evil-disposed persons from visiting this place for unlawful purposes."<sup>117</sup>

This emphasis on protecting Brookline "against intrusion and annoyance from evil-disposed persons" was a recurrent theme of the town reports of the late 1850s and early 1860s.<sup>118</sup> The Brookline Police Department was further strengthened in November 1865, when as a result of "numerous breaches of the peace, and attempts at burglary and violence in the neighborhood," and in response to a petition signed by numerous citizens, the number of officers was increased and the police budget more than doubled.<sup>119</sup>

Brookline's constabulary was significantly increased again in 1870, this time in response to a rash of burglaries, not only in Brookline, but also in surrounding towns. "The great number of burglaries which occurred during the

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<sup>116</sup> Brookline, Selectmen's Report for 1857-58, 23.

<sup>117</sup> Brookline, Selectmen's Report for 1858-59, 26.

<sup>118</sup> Brookline, Selectmen's Report for 1863-64, 21; Brookline, Selectmen's Report for 1864-65 (Boston, 1865) 25.

<sup>119</sup> Brookline, Selectmen's Report for 1865-66, 25.

early part of the winter suggest the propriety of organizing an extended night watch," the 1869 Selectmen's report declared. It also reported increased instances of "noisy and disorderly persons driving horses through certain streets at unmerciful rates, especially on the Sabbath, whom it has been very difficult to control."<sup>120</sup> By 1873, the Brookline police force consisted of twelve men, five on duty during the day and seven at night.<sup>121</sup>

The contrast with Brighton could not have been more marked. Despite its more serious law enforcement problems, the market town's 1873 police force was substantially smaller than Brookline's, consisting of only one daytime officer, posted to the police station in Brighton Center, and four others who, except for Market Day, worked only at night. Two of these night officers were stationed at Brighton Center, while the others were sent to Barry's Corner and Brighton Corners in the northern part of town.<sup>122</sup>

In the 1869 to 1873 period, when Brookline was spending \$46,980.66 on its police, Brighton expended only \$19,364.77, a sum far from adequate to its needs.<sup>123</sup> At the time of its annexation to Boston in 1874, noted Roger Lane in Policing the City: Boston, 1822-1885, Brighton had the highest arrest rate

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<sup>120</sup> Brookline, Selectmen's Report for 1869-70 (Boston, 1870) 35-36.

<sup>121</sup> Brookline, Treasurer's Report for the Year ending February 1, 1873 (Boston, 1873) 42.

<sup>122</sup> Brighton, Official Reports for the Year Ending February 1, 1873, 145.

<sup>123</sup> Brookline, Town Reports, vol. 2: 24, 29, 34 and 41; Brighton, Official Reports for the Year Ending February 1, 1869, 28; Brighton, Official Reports for the Year Ending January 31, 1870, 5; Brighton, Official Reports for the Year Ending January 31, 1871, 26; Brighton, Official Reports for the Year Ending January 31, 1873, 96; Brighton, Official Reports for the Year Ending January 5, 1874, 30.

proportionately of any division of the city.<sup>124</sup> While Brighton feared that too rigid law enforcement would serve to undermine its market economy and was accordingly willing to tolerate a measure of public disorder, Brookline regarded vigorous law enforcement as fundamental to the maintenance of its elite status.

Brookline provided an idyllic setting for the middle and upper classes, but the town's working class population suffered under many hardships. The residents of Brookline's Irish community made much slower economic progress, for example, than did the residents of Brighton's Irish community. As a "zone of emergence" Brookline had less to offer than Brighton. While employment opportunities existed in Brookline aplenty, in service to the town's affluent residents, opportunities to engage in business for oneself were rather limited in the elite suburb. As late as 1868, only a handful of shops in Brookline Village were operated by Irish proprietors.<sup>125</sup>

Some insight into the economic condition of Brookline's Irish community may be gained from an examination of the records of the local Catholic church. By the early 1850s, the combined Irish population of Brookline and Brighton was large enough to warrant the regular celebration of Catholic mass for both groups in Brookline. The first such service was held at Lyceum Hall in Brookline Village on July 30, 1852.

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<sup>124</sup> Roger Lane, Policing the City: Boston, 1822-1885 (New York: Atheneum, 1971) 177-78; Brookline, Auditor's Report of Receipts and Expenditures for...1867-73 (Boston, 1873) 34; Brighton, Official Reports for 1867-73.

<sup>125</sup> The Brookline, Jamaica Plain and West Roxbury Directory for 1868, 76-88.

In 1853, a Catholic church was built on Andem Place, a street adjacent to the Brookline Village Depot, just west of the burgeoning Irish quarter. A wooden structure with a seating capacity of 780, St. Mary's opened its doors for the first time on Christmas day, 1853. Father Michael O'Beirne presided over the church in its first year. He was succeeded, in early 1855, by Father Joseph M. Finotti, a scholarly priest who also served as the literary editor of the Boston Pilot, the city's Catholic paper. Finotti had charge of both the Brookline and Brighton Catholic parishes until 1872, when the two were separated administratively.<sup>126</sup>

That St. Mary's had difficulty meeting its financial obligations is shown by the following letter which Father Finotti addressed to Bishop John Bernard Fitzpatrick on May 4, 1855:

The debt which gave the most uneasiness has been very much diminished, with the exception of the lumber merchant (to whom we owe a little more than \$1,800): he will not press, if he be kept quiet with remittances of from \$50 dollars upward now and then, as I have been doing since January. And with the exception of the builder J. McDonald (to whom we owe \$533 dollars) whom we must not pay til he has stopped the leaks of the church, besides these there is a little sum (\$60) owed to Mr. Hovey for use of a small organ, to Mr. Hand (\$105) for salary in playing the organ, and to messrs Simmons & Co. (\$720) for the large organ. To the last firm I have given six notes, signed by me and endorsed by Mr. Donahoe, the last of which becomes due on January 1st 1856, and two of which I have redeemed. In addition to all this there are nearly \$5,000 due to the Catholics for money borrowed of them. Add to this the amount of mortgage obtained from Mr. Bowditch (\$4,000) and the debt hanging on the Catholic Church of Brookline will amount to \$12,000.

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<sup>126</sup> Bolton, 146; Mary Ellen O'Brien, "One Hundred Years Ago Brookline and Brighton Catholics Started a Parish," Boston Globe, 11 May 1952 in Churches-Catholic: Pamphlet File, Brookline Room, Brookline Public Library.

Thus through a combination of a conventional mortgage with leading real estate conveyancer William I. Bowditch, borrowing from well-to-do Catholics, and holding the church's many creditors at bay with small remittances, Father Finotti was able to keep the parish financially solvent and to gradually reduce its debt. He also assured the bishop that he had satisfied St. Mary's most insistent creditors, who had apparently given his predecessor some difficulty. "To several Catholics, who were loud in their denunciation against Rev. M. O'Beirne, I have returned their money and got independent of them." Despite this progress, however, St. Mary's \$12,000 debt was a substantial burden for a parish made up largely of Irish laborers and their families.<sup>127</sup>

On Thanksgiving Day, 1855, the burden on St Mary's suddenly and substantially increased when a fire gutted the church. While the parish eventually rebuilt the structure on an expanded scale, procuring the necessary funds proved a long and difficult process. St. Mary's financial condition, never strong, deteriorated to the point that it could not afford to construct a residence for its pastor. On May 19, 1857 the diocesan records note, "The Bishop goes to Brookline in the afternoon to visit the new house lately built by Rev. Mr. Finotti for his residence. It is not the property of the parish but has been paid for with money which Rev. Mr. F. has borrowed."<sup>128</sup>

The building of a church in Brighton, by contrast, presented locational and political rather than financial problems. In May 1855, Father Finotti rejected a

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<sup>127</sup> Finotti to Fitzpatrick, 4 May 1855, Archdiocesan Archives, Boston.

<sup>128</sup> Robert H. Lord, History of the Archdiocese of Boston, 1604-1943, vol. 3 (Boston: The Pilot Publishing Company, 1945) 489-90; Memoranda of the Diocese of Boston, vol. 5: 212, Archdiocesan Archives, Boston.

site at the intersection of Cambridge and North Beacon Streets in present-day Union Square, Allston for the church on the grounds that "the Catholics residing in the center of Brighton will be just as far from that place as they are from Brookline" and "because it is situated in the slenderest Catholic neighborhood of the whole parish." A desirable lot was available "on very suitable terms," he continued, closer to the center of town, but added,

This is a very ticklish subject, and it is my opinion that nothing must be said about it until the amount of subscription is swelled, otherwise we will lose much. There is evidently a silent party [illegible]. About this nothing satisfactory can be said or explained to Your Lordship until you will be on the spot.<sup>129</sup>

Brighton's first Catholic church, St. Columba's, a wooden structure with a seating capacity of 870 (an edifice larger than St. Mary's), opened in late 1855. It stood on Bennett Street, less than a quarter mile north of Brighton Center. Attendance was only half that at St. Mary's, judging from the pew rent income of the two parishes. Despite its smaller membership, however, Brighton's Catholics were able to meet the costs of this somewhat larger building with little difficulty. On January 1, 1857, less than a year after the opening of the St Columba's, the parish debt had already been reduced to a relatively modest \$2,200, as compared to \$10,305 in Brookline.<sup>130</sup>

The Irish communities of Brookline and Brighton were in fact quite different. The immigrants who settled in Brighton had been drawn there by the

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<sup>129</sup> Finotti to Fitzpatrick, 4 May 1855: Archdiocesan Archives, Boston.

<sup>130</sup> Parish Reports, St. Mary's of the Assumption and St. Columba's Churches, 1855-71, Archdiocesan Archives, Boston.

town's buoyant commercial and industrial economy rather than by ample opportunities in domestic service. As late as 1870, 48.5 percent of Brookline's Irish were still employed as domestic servants, gardeners, or coachmen. The comparable figure for Brighton was only 22.9 percent.<sup>131</sup>

Most significantly, the Irish fared much better economically in Brighton than in Brookline. By 1870, 20 percent of Brighton's Irish work force was skilled, as compared to only 8 percent in Brookline. This holds true even when domestic servants are eliminated from the calculation---24.9 percent in Brighton versus 13.3 percent in Brookline. Brighton's commercial economy provided opportunities for economic progress that did not exist in Brookline. By 1870, Brighton's Irish work force included twenty-two butchers, five horse dealers, three cattle dealers, two hotel keepers, two saloon keepers, and two harnessmakers, all occupations that no Irish resident of Brookline held.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> U. S. Census, 1870, Population Schedule, Brighton.

<sup>132</sup> This raises the question of whether the Irish who settled in Brighton were more highly skilled to begin with than their counterparts in Brookline. In the absence of historical records establishing the skill level of immigrants at the time of their settlement, there is no way to answer this question with assurance. We do know that the men who accumulated substantial property in both towns in the 1850 to 1870 period tended to be pre-1845 immigrants or their children, persons with more investment capital and a higher degree of education than was typical of the immigrant population at-large. While Brighton's cattle and slaughtering industries and horticultural/ market gardening industries would have drawn on skills which the Irish immigrants, with their agricultural background, possessed (farming and livestock tending skills, for example), employment as gardeners on Brookline's great estates also drew on these pre-existing skills. The greater degree of success the Irish achieved in Brighton also raises the question of why fewer Irish settled in Brighton, with its more dynamic economy, than in Brookline. In 1870, Brookline's Irish workforce totalled 1170, while Brighton's totalled only 639. Thus 45 percent fewer Irish workers lived in the market town than in the commuter suburb. How are we to account for this anomaly? The fact that nearly half of Brookline's Irish were employed in service to the well-to-do goes far

Brookline's rejection of industrialization meant less economic mobility for its Irish residents. While some industry developed in Brookline after 1850, these were mostly light manufacturing establishments. The only noxious industry to be established in Brookline after 1850 was the Brookline Gas Light Company works, situated at the intersection of Brookline Avenue and Washington Street, right in the midst of the Irish quarter. This industrial complex, founded in the early 1850s by prominent local residents to furnish gas for Brookline's streets, was in 1870 capitalized at \$100,000. However, the Brookline Gas Light Company employed only four men in 1860 and only five in 1870, and thus did not significantly enhance employment opportunities for its Irish neighbors.<sup>133</sup>

The most compelling evidence of how much better the Irish fared in Brighton comes from a comparative analysis of property ownership. By 1870, forty-nine of Brighton's Irish heads of household were paying taxes on estates valued at \$3,000 or more, while only fifteen of Brookline's Irish taxpayers had

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toward furnishing an answer. Here were jobs in abundance, low-paying perhaps, but jobs nonetheless. Also, some Irish were drawn to Brookline by the employment opportunities in the building trades (which employed many unskilled workers as well). By 1870 fifty Irish stone masons, bricklayers, carpenters, painters, plasterers and slaters lived in Brookline, benefitting from the commuter suburb's residential construction industry. Some of the Irish who accumulated significant wealth in the 1850 to 1870 period were situated in this sector of the economy. But the opportunities for economic gain in Brookline's building trades never approached the opportunities for gain in Brighton's cattle/ slaughtering industry and related businesses (hotel keeping, saloon-keeping, the liquor trade). Brighton's vibrant fringe-zone economy furnished immigrants with opportunities for rapid advancement that were simply unavailable in Brookline. U. S. Census, 1870, Population Schedule, Brookline; U. S. Census, 1870, Population Schedule, Brighton.

<sup>133</sup> Karr, "The Evolution of an Elite Suburb," 172; James Driscoll, "Industry in Brookline," 27-30.

attained a comparable level of property ownership. In addition, the value of the property held by Brighton's ten wealthiest Irish taxpayers averaged \$24,713, while the Brookline average was a mere \$10,290. Significantly, eight of Brighton's ten top Irish taxpayers earned their livelihood from business enterprises that were in one way or another related to the cattle and slaughtering industries.<sup>134</sup>

Brighton's Irish heads of household were also better off from the standpoint of real property ownership than their Brookline counterparts. By 1870, 40.7 percent of Brighton's Irish heads of household were paying taxes on land or buildings versus only 28.3 percent in Brookline. Clearly more Brighton Irish owned homes.<sup>135</sup>

The wealthiest Irish resident in Brighton in the early 1870s was William Scollans. According to his obituary, which appeared in the Boston Transcript in 1903, he was born in Ireland, arriving in America as an infant in 1835. In his The Story of the Irish in Boston (1889), James B. Cullen identifies Scollans' birthplace as Newton, Massachusetts. Whatever the case, Scollans was the son of recent immigrants who arrived before the potato famine influx of the late 1840s and thus grew up in the United States.<sup>136</sup> Scollans eventually "drifted to Brighton" where "his rise from a very humble and menial position to be an alert buyer of cattle was extraordinarily rapid and he was soon on the road to wealth."<sup>137</sup> His name

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<sup>134</sup> Brighton, Official Reports for the Year 1872-73 (Boston, 1873) 154-177.

<sup>135</sup> Brighton, Official Reports for the Year 1872-73, 154-177; Brookline, Tax List for the Town of Brookline for the Year 1872 (Boston, 1873) 2-75.

<sup>136</sup> Boston Evening Transcript, 1 March 1903: 16; John B. Cullen, The Story of the Irish in Boston (Boston, 1889) 389.

<sup>137</sup> Boston Evening Transcript, 1 March 1906: 16.

appeared on the Brighton census for the first time in 1855, at age 19, when he was listed as a "trader." Fifteen years later, in 1870, the census identified him as a "Cattle Dealer," with property worth \$60,000. By 1872 he was the 46th largest taxpayer in the town, which placed him in the 95th percentile of taxpayers.<sup>138</sup>

Scollans resided in a large house, once the residence of Brighton's Unitarian minister, conspicuously situated at the corner of Washington and Foster Streets at the western end of Brighton Center, within easy walking distance of the cattle yards where he conducted much of his business. This was the part of town where most of Brighton's large-scale cattle dealers resided. One of his neighbors was Gustavus Franklin Swift, who later founded the Swift Meatpacking Company in Chicago. Again according to the Transcript account of his career, Scollans "was known to the leading cattlemen as the keenest and shrewdest cattle buyer in Brighton. He acquired and lost several fortunes."<sup>139</sup>

Scollans rapid rise is reflected in the steadily increasing taxes he paid the town over the years:

1858 - \$12.07

1863 - \$55.58

1868 - \$253.16

1872 - \$580.71<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Massachusetts Census, 1855, Brighton; U. S. Census, 1870, Population Schedule, Brighton; Brighton, Official Reports for the Year 1872-73, 168.

<sup>139</sup> Boston Evening Transcript, 2 March 1903, 16; G. M. Hopkins, Atlas of The County of Suffolk, Massachusetts, vol. 1: plate H.

<sup>140</sup> Brighton, Annual Report for 1854-55, 17-39; Brighton, Annual Report for the Year 1858-59, 40; Brighton, Annual Report for the Year 1863-64

Another Irishman who gained financial success in Brighton was Patrick Moley, who ranked fifth among Brighton's Irish taxpayers in 1872, with property worth more than \$20,000.<sup>141</sup> Born in County Armaugh, Ireland in 1824, he reached America in 1842, at age 18, settling in Montreal. Over the next several years, Moley engaged in horse trading between Montreal, New York, and Boston. He first visited Brighton in 1849, and invested heavily in local real estate. He did not settle in the town permanently until 1857, however. Moley owned a horse trading stable on Chestnut Hill Avenue, a short distance from the cattle yards.<sup>142</sup> Horse trading and real estate speculation soon made him a wealthy man, as indicated by the increase in his taxes between 1858 and 1872:

1858 - \$20.89

1863 - \$44.30

1868 - \$118.34

1872 - \$231.90<sup>143</sup>

Moley's economic success was matched by political success. In 1871 he became the first Irishman elected to the Brighton Board of Selectmen. Several

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(Brighton, 1864), 85; Brighton, Official Reports for the Year 1868-69 (Brighton, 1869) 56; Brighton, Official Reports for the Year 1872-73, 168.

<sup>141</sup> Brighton, Official Reports for the Year 1872-73, 164.

<sup>142</sup> The Item, 11 May 1895: 1.

<sup>143</sup> Brighton, Annual Report of the Receipts and Expenditures for the Year 1858-59, 34; Brighton, Annual Report of the Receipts and Expenditures for the Year 1863-64, 81; Brighton, Official Reports for the Year 1868-69, 51; Brighton, Official Reports for the Year 1872-73, 164.

Irishmen gained election to key Brighton town offices in the late 1860s and early 1870s.<sup>144</sup>

Brookline's Irish businessmen fared less well. The single largest Irish taxpayer in Brookline in 1870 was James Driscoll, an undertaker, teamster, and contractor, who owned \$18,500 in property, only one-third as much as Brighton's William Scollans. Driscoll lived on Harrison Place on the northern edge of the Irish quarter. This street (now the southern end of Kent Street) had become ethnically integrated with the establishment there of the Catholic parish house in 1857. Non-Catholic residents of Harrison Place included railroad president Ginnery Twitchell, Justin Jones, an editor, and Boston businessmen J. W. Edgerly and R. G. F. Candage, the latter serving as President of the School Committee in the early 1870s. The home of Brookline's second largest Irish taxpayer, James Rooney, a shoe dealer, who owned property valued at \$18,000, also stood on Harrison Place.<sup>145</sup>

By 1860 the commuter element had revolutionized Brookline. The western suburb now offered prosperous Bostonians a broad range of

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<sup>144</sup> The first Irish candidate to win election to a key Brighton post was Nathaniel G. Lynch who was chosen one of the town's two constables at the March 1868 annual meeting. In contrast to 1861, when the only Irish candidate for a town post polled a single vote, by 1871 Irish candidates accumulated 26.3 percent of all votes cast for town offices, at a time when they still comprised only about 20 percent of Brighton's electorate. No Irishman was elected to a major town office in Brookline, by contrast, until 1874, when James Driscoll was chosen to sit on the eight member School Committee. Brighton Town Records, vol. 4: 497-500; "Driscoll, James," Biographies, Pamphlet File, Brookline Room, Brookline Public Library.

<sup>145</sup> Brookline, Tax List for the Town of Brookline for the Year 1870, 19 and 51; Brookline Chronicle, 17 June 1926: 1.

government services (comparable in most respects to those provided by Boston)--an extensive network of well-constructed roadways, sidewalks, drainage facilities, street lighting, comprehensive public schooling, ample police and fire protection, and a first-rate public library.

Brookline's transformation from farming town (with Brahmin enclaves) to elite commuter suburb had been accomplished moreover with minimal conflict. The other key elements of the town's population, its farmers and working class Irish-Catholics, raised no discernable objection to the commuter-generated reforms. Commuters got the services they desired. Farmers and other major landowners benefitted from appreciating land values. The largely Irish working class took advantage of the employment opportunities provided by a combination of rapid residential development and expanding government services. A consensual redefinition of the public interest became possible in the 1850s because all the major elements of the population gained to some degree from the rise of a service-oriented government.

## **CHAPTER FIVE:**

### **ANNEXATION EMBRACED**

After decades of subordinating its residential to its cattle and slaughtering interests---of equating the "public good" with the prosperity of the town's "nuisance industries"---Brighton began to redefine itself in the early 1870s. This redefinition was initiated not by the town's commuters, who were relatively few in number, but by a small group of political entrepreneurs who recognized that the cattle and slaughtering industries were entering a period of irreversible decline and that greater opportunities for profitmaking now existed in middle and upper class residential development than in traditional fringe zone enterprises. While their reform program met formidable resistance in its earliest stages, ultimately they succeeded in convincing a majority of Brighton's electorate to support the reform program.

The transformation of a market town into a commuter suburb-in-embryo, which this chapter describes, occurred in three broad steps. First, Brighton's fifty or so slaughterhouses, described in 1866 as "prolific and provoking causes of disease," were replaced by a single, modern abattoir and the town's cattle yards, which also impeded residential development, were relocated from Brighton Center, where they had been situated since the inception of the industry, to a site adjoining the abattoir to industrialized North Brighton. This consolidation and relocation of the slaughtering and cattle industries in North Brighton opened the rest of the town to the possibility of middle and upper class suburban development.

Recognizing that middle and upper class commuters would locate in Brighton only if the town also succeeded in overcoming its many serious infrastructure problems, the same small group of entrepreneurs as had launched the abattoir venture pushed through an ambitious program of public works improvements. Under this program the town modernized its roadways, built new thoroughfares, installed sewers, drains, street lighting and sidewalks, constructed several elaborate public buildings, and expanded and modernized its police force. Brighton thereby equipped itself with most of the amenities that middle and upper class residents expected suburban communities to provide. The money for these improvements was obtained, moreover, not by increasing taxes (which might have derailed the reform program), but by resorting to very heavy borrowing. Both of these measures---the consolidation of the town's cattle and slaughtering industries and the modernization of its infrastructure---drove up local real estate values.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, in February 1874, the same group of entrepreneurs secured the annexation of Brighton by the City of Boston, which enabled its property owners to escape the potentially ruinous tax consequences of the heavy borrowing of the preceding four years. Had this huge debt not existed, annexation might well not have occurred. Opposition to absorption by Boston, which had been fairly widespread when the issue was first seriously broached in 1871, declined in direct proportion to the growth of the town's debt.

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<sup>1</sup> Brighton's real property values rose between 1870 and 1872 from \$3,317,029 to \$8,502,645---an increase of 156 percent. Brighton, Official Reports for 1869-70 (Boston, 1870) 38-39; Brighton, Official Reports for 1872-73 (Boston, 1873) 153.

The decade of the 1860s was the last in which Brighton's cattle and slaughtering industries were free to operate on an unregulated basis. During the Civil War the demand for meat rose to such an extent---profits were so huge---that little if any effort was made to control unhealthy slaughtering and waste disposal practices. Unhealthy modes of operation were so rife in these war years that the town's mortality rate nearly doubled, rising from 11.2 deaths per thousand in 1860 to 19.7 in 1864. Even when faced with a serious diphtheria epidemic in late 1864, an outbreak which took the lives of upper class as well as working class residents, Brighton's leaders failed to act to regulate the industry.<sup>2</sup>

Not until the war had ended, in April 1865, did the Board of Selectmen attempt to exert some control over these unhealthy practices, first by directing that all new butchering establishments be confined to the north side of Western Avenue (a similar policy had been adopted in the 1850s to little effect), and then by ordering one of the most offensive of the newer establishments shut down. The proprietors, Bradford White and John Dupee, both long-time residents, responded (in another familiar pattern) by calling a special town meeting, which transferred health regulation authority to an independent Board of Health made up of three slaughterhouse proprietors. The new body immediately annulled the Selectmen's order of prohibition on the grounds that it had been "improvidently issued, and by its terms is unreasonable and tending to impair the trade,

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<sup>2</sup> The victims of this 1865 epidemic included two children of local Baptist Minister Ralph H. Bowles, the son of Massachusetts State Senate President Joseph A. Pond, as well as members of the influential Standish, Herrick and Sanderson families. Brighton, Treasurer's Report for 1860 (Cambridge, 1860) 36-37; Brighton, Auditor's Report for 1865 (Boston, 1865) 42-43.

business and prosperity of said Town of Brighton."<sup>3</sup> The town's slaughterhouse proprietors thereby demonstrated anew their capacity to redirect public policy whenever their interests were threatened.

A second attempt at regulation came in 1866. A national cholera epidemic was underway, and there was growing concern that the dread disease would reach Brighton. In this panic-stricken atmosphere the Board of Selectmen invited Dr. Henry G. Clark of Boston, a public health expert, to visit Brighton's slaughterhouses and to recommend measures to reduce the risk of an outbreak in the market town.<sup>4</sup> Brighton contained forty-one slaughterhouses in 1866. Dr. Clark reported that these establishments were generally "conducted in a manner which I consider both disagreeable and dangerous, directly and remotely, to the immediate vicinage, and to public and individual health."<sup>5</sup>

Unhealthy slaughtering practices not only posed a major threat to the health of Brighton's residents, Dr. Clark noted, but were polluting land with much residential development potential. The Brooks brother's establishment, situated between Chestnut Hill Avenue and Foster Street, for example, was described as "discharg[ing] its semi-liquid filth all over the ground, directly in the rear, which after mixing with water in a little pond, took its course northerly through or near Baxter's Place, thence by Osborne's to George Brooks', and thence through Nonantum Vale and into Charles River." The Faneuil Valley Brook, Brighton's

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<sup>3</sup> Brighton Town Records, vol 4: 263-275.

<sup>4</sup> Charles E. Rosenberg, The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962) 117.

<sup>5</sup> Brighton, Inspection of the Slaughterhouses of Brighton on April 30, 1866 by Henry G. Clark, M.D. of Boston (Boston, 1866) 6.

most extensive watercourse, carried the discharge across hundreds of acres of prime real estate. Dr. Clark labelled such methods of disposal "prolific and provoking causes of disease." He recommended that this foul matter be buried or neutralized, that offal be carried away in tightly closed carts, and that the town prohibit the keeping of swine where they might feed on "such disgusting food."<sup>6</sup>

While a few proprietors complied with the doctor's recommendations, most continued butchering in the old way. The Selectmen (acting once again in the capacity of a Board of Health) responded with greater vigor than was characteristic, ordering the closing of five slaughterhouses between July and September 1866, at the height of the cholera scare.<sup>7</sup>

By September, however, with the danger seemingly receding, Brighton's leaders began having second thoughts. In early September they dismissed the charges against the Brown & Rogers slaughterhouse, a facility which had been accused of carrying on offensive practices on North Beacon Street, one of the town's principal public highways. Later that month the board declined to take action when a number of Brookline residents complained that two Brighton butchers, James and Charles Dana, were building a slaughterhouse near the town line that "would be a nuisance to the inhabitants of the vicinity, dangerous to the public health, that the exercise of said trade therein would be attended with noisome and injurious odors, and would be injurious to the estates of the inhabitants of the vicinity."<sup>8</sup> With the danger of a cholera epidemic safely behind them, the town's leaders reverted to their traditional permissive policies.

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<sup>6</sup> Brighton, Inspection of the Slaughterhouses, 8.

<sup>7</sup> Brighton Town Records, vol. 4: 305-306.

<sup>8</sup> Brighton Town Records, vol. 4: 304-314; Brookline residents also

Appeals for regulation in 1867 and 1868 also fell upon deaf ears. This is shown most dramatically in the Board's failure to act on a July 28, 1868 petition of seventeen Allston Depot area property owners (Cambridge Crossing had been renamed Allston in early 1868), the part of town which contained the greatest concentration of commuters. The petition requested that the slaughterhouses of John W. Hollis and Aaron Gunzenheiser be shut because they had

become a nuisance hurtful to the inhabitants, dangerous to the public health, much to the injury of the neighborhood and the town generally---fully believing that the time has arrived when such offensive trades should be prohibited so near churches, post office, private residences, and railroad depot where upwards of 50,000 passengers are carried annually.

The signers of this appeal included Isaac Pratt, Jr., the iron dealer who had long urged vigorous policies against the slaughtering industry, Brighton's two principal builders, Francis Standish and John Davenport, and several other major Allston landholders. Nine of the seventeen signers of this petition were Boston commuters.<sup>9</sup>

The sometimes unruly behavior of those who visited the cattle market to buy and sell also continued to trouble the community. The police report for 1866-67 identified three major law enforcement problems all stemming from the high

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complained about the slaughtering practices of Curtis & Boynton, Brighton's largest slaughterhouse, which was also located near the boundary. According to W. M. Cotton, a contemporary, "the good people of Brookline...complained so bitterly of the drainage from this establishment flowing [into Brookline] that the company employed one of the most noted engineers around Boston to plan a filtering plant. He did so, and one was built at an expense of fifteen hundred dollars.... The first heavy rain proved the plan worthless." W. M. Cotton, "Brighton Fifty Years Ago," The Item, 13 April 1912: 2.

<sup>9</sup> Brighton Town Records, vol. 4: 387; Boston City Directory for 1868 (Boston, 1868).

rate of transiency in Brighton: (1) "The class of men that visit us, and occupy our public squares and streets on [market days], for the purpose of trading in the poor quality of horses, &c."; (2) "Fast and reckless driving" on Brighton streets on Sundays by way of the Mill Dam which "is considered the best way to ride out of the City of Boston"; and (3) "A very large increase in the number of laborers to be employed at the Chestnut Hill Reservoir" and "the experience and trial your policemen have had with that class of men."<sup>10</sup> These conditions prompted the adoption, in October 1867, of a more stringent set of by-laws which forbade gambling in the streets, the obstruction of streets and sidewalks, the discharging of firearms in public places, and the practice of riding through the streets at a speed of more than eight miles per hour, among other offenses.<sup>11</sup> The problem that posed the greatest threat to public order, however, was drunkenness. Brighton's hotels dispensed liquor in violation of state law and the seizure in Brighton of illegal liquor by the state police was a common occurrence. In the year 1872, nearly 55 percent of the 505 arrests made in the town were made for drunkenness. The second most common cause of arrest was assault and battery.<sup>12</sup> The appropriation for police protection was increased in the 1867 to

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<sup>10</sup> Brighton, Official Reports for 1866-67 (Boston, 1867) 56-57.

<sup>11</sup> Brighton, Town Records, vol 4: 364.

<sup>12</sup> The public sale of liquor was forbidden under state law from 1852 to 1868. The Massachusetts prohibition law allowed alcoholic beverages to be sold only by duly appointed agents in every city and town, to be used in the arts or for mechanical, medicinal, or chemical purposes. Enforcement proved very difficult since the law was often ignored by local officials. In 1865 the Commonwealth established a State Constabulary, to be used at the discretion of the Governor "to see that the laws of the Commonwealth are observed and enforced." While outright prohibition was repealed in 1868, and towns given the right to sell wine and beer by local option, the state liquor laws continued to be highly restrictive. Not until 1875 did Massachusetts adopt a general local option law. Cornelius

1869 period, rising from \$2,200 in 1867 to \$3,500 in 1868 and 1869, but spending for police was still too little to ensure public safety.<sup>13</sup>

The Brighton of 1870 was not appreciably different demographically or economically from what it had been in the 1850s and 1860s. Changing conditions in the town had little to do with the transformation that occurred the 1870 to 1874 period. External forces fostered these changes. Brighton's population had increased by 72 percent since the mid-1850s, but the cattle and slaughtering industries continued solidly dominant. The town's small middle and upper class commuter element was much too small to significantly influence town policies. Only 8.2 percent of Brighton's workforce held jobs in Boston in 1870 (as compared to 27 percent in Brookline), with about a third commuting to the metropolis to dispose of Brighton produced goods, especially meat and animal by-products.<sup>14</sup>

Brighton was a working-class community in 1870, as it had been for decades. About 60 percent of its employed residents belonged to the working class, roughly the same percentage as in 1855. Half of these were skilled or semi-skilled.<sup>15</sup> The most important single occupation among the more skilled

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Dalton, ed., Leading the Way: A History of the Massachusetts General Court, 1629-1980 (Boston: Office of the Massachusetts Secretary of State, 1980) 127-128 and 164-165; Massachusetts, Reports on the Subject of a License Law by a Joint Special Committee of the Legislature of Massachusetts (Boston, 1867) 39; Brighton, Official Reports 1872-73, 145-147.

<sup>13</sup> Brighton, Town Records, vol 4: 334, 372 and 406.

<sup>14</sup>U. S. Census, 1870, Population Schedule, Brighton; Massachusetts State Census, 1855, Brighton; Boston City Directory for 1870 (Boston, 1870).

<sup>15</sup> Much of the residential development that Brighton experienced in the 1850s and 1860s involved the construction of modest housing for its expanding

workers was butcher, the purveyors of this trade making up 28 percent of the total. The other key elements in the skilled/ semi-skilled category were construction workers (27 percent) and transportation workers (22 percent).

The continued importance of the cattle and slaughtering trades is apparent in the composition of the middle and upper class workforce, 37 percent of whose members earned their living from the cattle and slaughtering industries or a closely related activity. Other key categories were substantially smaller: merchants comprising only 20 percent of the category, farmers and horticulturalists 11.2 percent, and manufacturers 7.2 percent.<sup>15</sup>

Brighton might have continued to maintain its longstanding economic pattern had it not been for three external developments. Middle and upper class

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working class population, housing located conveniently near the town's commercial and industrial facilities. The development of these working class neighborhoods, which were spread out fairly widely over the face of the town, greatly diminished Brighton's desirability for middle and upper class families. Well-to-do Bostonians, who were leaving the city to escape contact with its burgeoning immigrant and working class populations were understandably reluctant to move into a community where large numbers of working class poor resided.

The two fastest growing areas of Brighton in the 1860s were the streets south of Brighton Center, which were situated near the cattle yards (the yards themselves occupying the north side of the Center), and the industrial area south of Western Avenue in North Brighton, near the river and the railroad. However, the construction of working class housing was by no means limited to these two zones. In contrast to Brookline, where lower class development was concentrated in one rather small and relatively well-defined neighborhood adjacent to Brookline Village, lower class housing in Brighton was diffused, consisting of many widely separated concentrations, located near industrial and commercial facilities. As early as 1858, a quarter of Brighton's housing stock consisted of structures worth \$1,000 or less, most of them occupied by Irish Catholic laborers and their families. Brighton, Annual Report for 1859 (Cambridge, 1859) 21-54; Brighton, Official Reports for 1872-73, 154-177.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Census, 1870, Population Schedule, Brighton.

Bostonians were moving out of the city in the early 1870s in growing numbers, which was driving up real property values in all of the peripheral towns, though much less markedly in Brighton than elsewhere. The rapid residential development experienced by other towns in the 1850s and 1860s wetted the appetite of Brighton's landowners. Many farmers had taken acreage out of production in the 1860s, in the expectation of rapid residential development, only to suffer bitter disappointment when all but a handful of Boston's commuters passed the market town by.<sup>17</sup> Of all the peripheral towns, Brighton experienced

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<sup>17</sup> The most dramatic change that Brighton experienced in the 1860s was a marked reduction in the amount of acreage devoted to farming. In 1860 there were fifty-seven farms in Brighton which occupied 56 percent of its total surface area. Ten years later, by contrast, farms comprised only 21 percent of Brighton's total acreage. Thus almost two-thirds of the town's farm acreage was taken out of production in a single decade. The coming of horsecar service to Brighton in the late 1850s may have prompted landowners to throw property onto the open market, but the results were highly disappointing. That land values failed to meet the expectations of Brighton's major landowners, especially in the more remote western section of town, seems obvious. In 1863, for example, Samuel Bigelow subdivided a 48-acre site (the old Parkman estate) near Oak Square into 82 building lots, which he then sold at public auction. A speculator, Chelsea developer George Gerrish, bought up the entire property, but Gerrish's land remained almost totally undeveloped until the early 1870s. In June 1863 the heirs of Samuel Brooks, another major landowner, subdivided a 28 acre parcel of the family's 70-acre farm, also located in the western part of town, into four parcels, which they likewise offered for sale. No residential development followed these sales, however. Instead, the largest of the parcels was purchased by George Reed, a slaughterhouse proprietor. Local businessmen acquired two of the three other parcels, while the fourth remained unsold, and in the hands of the Brooks heirs until the 1870s. Apart from Reed, who built a slaughterhouse on his parcel, this land experienced no residential development whatsoever before 1870. U. S. Census, 1860, Agricultural Schedule, Brighton; U. S. Census, 1870, Agricultural Schedule, Brighton; "Plan of 82 Building Lots in the Town of Brighton," Middlesex County Registry of Deeds, Plan Book 14: 10 (A of 2), May 18, 1863; Bill Moriarty, "The Civil War Misconnection," Allston Brighton Community News, July-August, 1978, 7; "A Plan of Land Situated in Brighton Belonging to the Heirs of Samuel Brooks, Plan Book 14: 712.

the least suburbanization in the 1860s, its land values continuing substantially lower than those of comparably situated communities like Roxbury, Dorchester, Cambridge or Brookline.<sup>18</sup>

The Boston & Albany Railroad's introduction of refrigerated railroad cars in 1869 was another of the external developments that served to bring change to Brighton in the 1870 to 1874 period. Most of the cattle arriving in Brighton in the late 1860s came from western states, especially Texas, by means of cattle drives to the Mississippi River, shipment to Illinois by cattle boat, and rail transport east via Buffalo and Albany to the Brighton cattle yards.<sup>19</sup> There being no refrigerated railroad cars, cattle had to be slaughtered locally.

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<sup>18</sup> There were other forces which may have encouraged farmers to take land out of production in the 1860s, but they were relatively weak. In the 1867 to 1870 period, for example, the City of Boston built the Chestnut Hill Reservoir at the southwestern corner of the town, thus providing the area with a magnificent visual and recreational amenity, a body of water said to be more beautiful than the Gardner Hill district's splendid Brookline Reservoir. The Charles River Railroad (which had been built through the area in 1853) responded by establishing a depot to service the reservoir area, calling it Reservoir Station. The construction of the reservoir and the opening of this depot (which provided convenient access to the city) gave the southeastern corner of Brighton (an area now known as the Cleveland Circle-Aberdeen district) a distinct advantage in the competition for suburban development. While land values did rise somewhat in the 1866 to 1870 period, the advantages the area enjoyed were vitiated by the proximity of two slaughterhouses, one a particularly odorous piggery which slaughtered 18,000 hogs and produced nearly four million pounds of pork, lard and soap annually. "This business was that of slaughtering hogs, rendering lard, and manufacturing lard oil," a contemporary recollected. "The offal from the slaughterhouse was usually piled up in the open air and quite often not covered with anything, and was allowed to decay." Boston Evening Transcript, 14 April 1870: 1; Edward Stanwood, ed., Boston Illustrated (Boston, 1872) 118; Brookline Transcript, 6 June 1871: 2.

<sup>19</sup> Kenneth Lewis, "Livestock Marketing and Meatpacking," thesis, Northeastern University, 1954, 6; Boston, Report on the Sale of Bad Meat in Boston, Boston City Documents, vol. 3, 74 (Boston, 1871) 8.

On April 22, 1869, the Boston Daily Advertiser contained ominous news for Brighton's cattle and slaughtering interests. It announced the arrival in Boston from the west of the first dressed meat transported in new, improved refrigerator cars:

A refrigerator car constructed on a new principle applied and patented by Messrs. William Davis & Sons arrived in the city yesterday morning on the Boston & Albany Railroad laden with 16,000 pounds of beef, placed on board in Detroit on the night of Wednesday of last week.

Messrs. Brown, Plumber & Company disposed of the bulk of the meat yesterday to Boston butchers who confess that it was in better condition than meat received directly from our home market.<sup>20</sup>

The introduction of refrigerated cars led to a substantial reduction of business for eastern slaughterhouses. It meant that western cattle would be slaughtered much nearer the source of supply, at great savings to the supplier. Brighton was already feeling the impact of this development by 1870. In testimony before the Boston Board of Aldermen, meat dealer William DeCoster, a Brighton resident who operated a wholesale meat business at Faneuil Hall Market, noted that his commission house, which had previously been supplied from Brighton's slaughterhouses, was now receiving a daily carload of refrigerated beef (the equivalent of twenty-five head of cattle), which he asserted was of finer quality than the meat previously furnished by the Brighton slaughterhouses.<sup>21</sup> Another Brighton resident who recognized the fundamental

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<sup>20</sup> Rudolph A. Clemen, George H. Hammond (1838-1886): Pioneer in Refrigerator Transportation (New York: The Newcomen Society of England, 1946) 14.

<sup>21</sup> Brighton's slaughterhouses continued to do substantial business,

nature of the changes that were underway was Gustavus Franklin Swift, who in 1872 began a series of moves westward, first to Albany, then to Buffalo, and finally to Chicago, where he founded the Swift Meatpacking Company, rising quickly to the status of a multi-millionaire.<sup>22</sup>

The other key external factor fostering change was the growth of the public health reform movement, especially the establishment in 1869 of the Massachusetts State Board of Health, the nation's first such state agency.<sup>23</sup> In principle, government had always had the authority to regulate so-called "nuisance industries" in the interest of the public health. This power was grounded in English common law and had been exercised by local governments from the inception of the American colonies. The establishment of quarantines and the adoption of laws restricting to particular locations such industries as slaughterhouses, tanneries, and gunpowder manufactories exemplified this doctrine.<sup>24</sup>

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however, since much livestock still arrived from the New England region. During 1871, 116,374 head of cattle and 486,306 sheep, an average of 2,238 cattle and 9,352 sheep a week, were slaughtered in Brighton. Brighton Messenger, 5 April 1873: 2. The quality of Brighton meat was very much on the public mind in 1871, following the death of a Brighton butcher who had been poisoned by contact with an infected animal, portions of which were later sold at Boston's Blackstone Market. Boston, Report on the Sale of Bad Meat in Boston, Boston City Documents, 1871, vol. 3: 4.

<sup>22</sup> Boston, Report on the Sale of Bad Meat in Boston, 11; Helen Swift, My Father and My Mother (Chicago: n.d.) 19-21; New York Times, 30 March 1903: 1; New York Times, 9 April 1903: 5.

<sup>23</sup> Barbara G. Rosenkrantz, Public Health and the State: Changing Views in Massachusetts, 1842-1936 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972) 53-56.

<sup>24</sup> Stanley K. Schultz, Constructing Urban Culture: American Cities and City Planning, 1800-1920 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989) 37.

However, in practice, the application of such powers was irregular. As legal historian Lawrence M. Friedman has written, "19th century government was no leviathan.... Basically, the law left it to private persons to enforce what regulation there was.... The state did not seriously try to administer, or carry through independently, what the statutes declared."<sup>25</sup>

In addition, as Stanley Schultz has noted, in pre-Civil War America enforcement of public health measures had been "retrospective and conservative," and also varied widely from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, depending on local circumstances. What might seem a reasonable application of the doctrine in semi-rural Brookline, for example, would be regarded as altogether unreasonable and dangerous in commercial Brighton.<sup>26</sup>

By the middle of the century, however, the courts had both redefined the nuisance doctrine and expanded police power to allow greater government control over private property. "Molding a new legal environment in response to the brute force of economic development," writes Schultz, "many judges permitted and even encouraged municipal corporations to plan and carry out public or quasi-public works for the presumed general welfare."<sup>27</sup> The courts of Massachusetts were especially active in confirming and expanding the authority of the legislature and municipalities to allow a greater measure of control over private property. The most important such decision was that handed down by

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<sup>25</sup> Lawrence M. Friedman, A History of American Law (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973) 163.

<sup>26</sup> Schultz, 43 and 52.

<sup>27</sup> Schultz, 44.

Judge Lemuel Shaw in Commonwealth vs. Alger (1851), which affirmed the sovereign authority of the legislature to establish "such reasonable restraints and regulations" as "are necessary to the common good and general welfare." Despite the threat Brighton's practices posed to public health, however, the legislature took no action against the market town's slaughtering industry until after the establishment of the State Board of Health.

A few pioneer public health reformers had been calling for the establishment of a state board for years. Rapid urbanization, the entry into the United States of large numbers of impoverished immigrants, and the rise of slums fostered a growing concern for public health. The Civil War proved a watershed event in the history of the public health movement. It accustomed the nation to large-scale government health initiatives, raised the prestige of the medical profession, and spread the belief that diseases could be halted by specific preventative measures.<sup>28</sup>

Once established the Massachusetts State Board of Health immediately targeted the Brighton slaughtering industry for reform, declaring in its first annual report,

During the past year 53,000 beeves, 342,000 sheep and 144,000 hogs were slaughtered within six miles of Faneuil Hall. While the population within this circle of towns and cities has every year been growing more dense, requiring not only increased supplies of meat, but also, in common justice to all, increased precautions for the maintenance of health, the mode of slaughtering cattle has undergone no change.

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<sup>28</sup> Rosenkrantz, 49-50.

It asserted that the Brighton slaughterhouses, far from improving since Dr. Clark's 1866 report, had grown "even more offensive," and recommended the consolidation of all the Boston area slaughterhouses into a modern facility or abattoir.

There are now about fifty slaughterhouses scattered through the town, none of them of great magnitude, each occupied by a single individual or firm, and each a separate center of pollution. The combined effect is familiar to all those who pass the Allston Station, on the Albany Railroad, in the summer months, or who drive through the town on the common roads. It is perceptible on the other side of the Charles River in Cambridge, when the wind blows in that direction.

The industry had to be brought under control, the State Board contended, not only because its slaughtering practices were a hazard (to the health of Boston as well as that of Brighton), but also because its methods of operation were extremely wasteful. In a modern abattoir "every part of the animal could be utilized on the spot the most cleanly and economical manner, without the stench of putrefaction, or the waste incident to transportation and the use of clumsy processes," the Board observed.<sup>29</sup> Dr. George Derby, its secretary, made a similar point in an August 21, 1871 letter to the Boston Common Council, then investigating slaughtering practices in Brighton. He expressed the hope that slaughterhouse proprietors would come to recognize that

the safety of the community and their own interests are identical; that the hauling about the country of offal and blood, and heads and feet, and hides and tallow, is wasteful; that the refuse which they now throw to hogs is of great value; and that all these portions of the slaughtered animals may be

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<sup>29</sup> Massachusetts, Report of the State Board of Health for 1871, 222.

utilized on the premises without delay, without any offensive odor, and to their great pecuniary advantage.<sup>30</sup>

The slaughtering industry's practices were wasteful in another respect, the board emphasized---in the degree to which they served to impede the suburban development of Brighton. Estimating the town's 1868 mortality rate at 22 per thousand and 27 per thousand in 1869, it noted that these rates were as high as those of Boston's most crowded wards, higher than those of any of the state's nineteen most populous cities and towns, and that they were "unequaled by any town of corresponding size in the Commonwealth."<sup>31</sup> This unhealthy atmosphere had the inevitable effect of discouraging middle and upper class residential development.

The future character of this beautiful township, possessing rare advantages for the establishment of healthful and pleasant homes for a hundred thousand people, must depend upon the manner in which its chief business is conducted. Tainted air will attract a tainted population, while a reform of its slaughterhouses, which is both practicable and safe, will not only insure the future health of Brighton, but greatly increase the value of its property.<sup>32</sup>

Pointing to the successes that other major cities such as New York and Paris had experienced in establishing unified slaughtering facilities, the State Board advised the legislature to take similar action with regard to the Boston area by establishing "one or more abattoirs" there.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Boston, Report on the Sale of Bad Meat in Boston, 23.

<sup>31</sup> Massachusetts, Report of the State Board of Health for 1870, 24.

<sup>32</sup> Massachusetts, Report of the State Board of Health for 1869 (Boston, 1870) 22 and 25.

<sup>33</sup> Massachusetts, Report of the State Board of Health for 1869, 31: Rosenkrantz, 65.

While the recommendation for an abattoir or abattoirs originated with the State Board of Health, it was three Brighton entrepreneurs who took the first step to establish one---Horace W. Baxter, Horace W. Jordan, and Benjamin Franklin Ricker. Prior to filing the enabling legislation, however, they had secured election to Brighton's Board of Selectmen, the agency of local government empowered to regulate the slaughtering industry. This they accomplished at a March 5, 1870 town meeting.<sup>34</sup> These men, with Ricker's business partner, George Wilson (who joined the leadership somewhat later) and the town's most important politician, William Wirt Warren, were the primary leaders of the 1870 to 1874 reform movement.

Nothing in the previous careers of these men foreshadowed the roles they were to play as agents of sweeping change. Indeed, two of them, Jordan and Ricker, had opposed slaughterhouse regulation in 1865 as members of the special Board of Health that overturned the 1865 order of closure against slaughterhouse proprietors White and Dupee. Three of these architects of reform---Baxter, Jordan, and Ricker---had been engaged in the cattle and slaughtering industries for years. The fourth, William Wirt Warren, a lawyer, frequently represented cattle dealers and slaughterhouse proprietors. They were also relatively young---Jordan and Baxter were 45 years old; Ricker and Warren 36. Wilson, the oldest, was 50. Their careers had been marked by vigorous enterprise, political as well as economic. Not only did they show remarkable foresight in the economic realm, but they possessed political skills of the highest order.

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<sup>34</sup> Brighton Town Records, vol. 4: 450.

These men recognized in the rise of a powerful public health movement and in the establishment of a state board of health an opportunity to garner economic and political power. Whereas in past years the state government had been reluctant to intervene to regulate slaughtering practices, by 1870 it seemed ready to do so. The State Board of Health was calling for the consolidation of the slaughtering industry, and the state legislature seemed prepared to act favorably on that recommendation. Moreover, the City of Boston, which was growing increasingly concerned about the quality of its meat supply, had added its voice to the demand for effective regulation. If consolidation was inevitable, they reasoned, why not seize the initiative by establishing an abattoir under their own management.

In initiating the abattoir proposal, Warren and his associates were reverting to the pattern of collaboration between government and business that had existed in the earliest decades of Brighton's history, but that had later been abandoned. When Brighton sought independence from Cambridge in 1807, it did so with the intension of using the powers of local governmental to more effectively protect the interests of its cattle and slaughtering industries which Cambridge's neglectful policies seemed to be jeopardizing. In the years that followed, its government sought to promote the interests of the cattle and slaughtering industries by such measures as bringing the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture to the town in 1819, and undertaking transportation projects calculated to benefit its core industries. This pattern of proactive collaboration between government and business lasted into the mid-1830s. In the three and a half decades that followed, however, the town resorted to a more passive or laissez-faire policy, which likewise worked to the advantage of its key

industries, by then solidly established and much less needful of active support. In the early 1870s Brighton simply reverted to the earlier pattern of proactive collaboration with local business interests.

The five reform leaders possessed a combination of business and political skills. Benjamin Francis Ricker had been the most successful in economic terms. Born in Brighton in 1834, the son of Calvin Ricker, a butcher, he had attended the local schools before entering the cattle trade. For a number of years he had leased and run the Brighton cattle yards, while also operating a livery stable on School Street in Boston, the largest such establishment in the city. In 1866 he and Wilson, owner of the Brighton Hotel, won the contract for all the excavating and teaming work at the Chestnut Hill Reservoir, the largest construction project undertaken in Brighton to that date. The two men were obviously politically well-connected. The excavating contract totalled \$474,000, some twenty percent of the cost of the massive project. By October 1868, Ricker and Wilson had eighty-eight teams working at the reservoir.<sup>35</sup>

The reservoir contract must have been highly profitable, judging from the increase in Ricker's taxable wealth in the 1863 and 1873 period. In 1863, his taxes had totalled a mere \$39.98. By 1872, they came to nearly \$2,000. With property worth about \$180,000, the cattle dealer-livery stable owner-city contractor had become the largest resident taxpayer in the town.<sup>36</sup> In contrast to his associates, however, Ricker played little part in town politics before 1870.

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<sup>35</sup> The Item, 27 June 1896: 1; Winship, vol. 2: 22.

<sup>36</sup> Brighton, Annual Report for 1858-59 (Cambridge, 1859) 39; Brighton, Auditor's Report for 1863-64 (Boston, 1864) 84; Brighton, Official Reports for 1868-69 (Boston 1869) 55; Brighton, Official Reports for 1872-73, 167.

Though he had no role in the abattoir initiative, Ricker's partner, George A. Wilson, would later be a key figure in promoting other aspects of the reform program, especially annexation. Born in Pepperell, Massachusetts in 1825, he arrived in Brighton in 1847, at age seventeen. Originally a hotel keeper who owned and operated the old Brighton Hotel at the eastern end of Brighton Center, his activities soon branched out to include the Chestnut Hill Reservoir teaming contract and extensive real estate investments. From 48th largest taxpayer in 1858, he advanced to 43rd in 1863, 33rd in 1868, and to 19th position by 1872, when the value of his Brighton property stood at about \$100,000. Emblematic of his growing wealth was the purchase in 1868 of the old Whittemore Mansion, Brighton Center's most elaborate residence. Not until after the annexation of Brighton to Boston, however, did Wilson hold an elective office, serving briefly in the Massachusetts House of Representatives.<sup>37</sup>

It was William Wirt Warren who achieved the greatest electoral success. Warren brought great political influence and skill to the alliance and on that basis should be accounted its guiding spirit. His family had lived in Brighton since the mid-18th century, and had always wielded influence in the town. William Wirt's father, William Warren, had served as Town Clerk from 1835 to 1857 and as Postmaster from 1843 to 1857. A graduate of Brighton High School, young Warren was one of the first two students sent to college from that institution, graduating from Harvard in 1854 and Harvard Law School in 1856. He then formed a partnership with Thomas P. Proctor, a leading Boston attorney. The

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<sup>37</sup> The Item, 26 June 1907: 5; Winship, vol. 1: 114; Winship, vol. 2: 102; Brighton, Annual Report for 1858-59 (Cambridge, 1858) 42; Brighton, Auditor's Report for 1863-64, 88; Brighton, Official Reports for 1868-69, 57; Brighton, Official Reports for 1872-73, 170.

Warrens were Democrats in an era when that party was in the ascendant in Brighton.<sup>38</sup>

Warren's rise to political prominence occurred with unusual rapidity. In 1857, at age twenty-three, he succeeded his father as Town Clerk, a position he continued to hold until 1866, when President Andrew Johnson appointed him Collector of Internal Revenue for the Seventh Massachusetts District. Warren also served as a delegate to the 1868 Democratic National Convention; as State Senator from 1871 to 1875; and as Congressman from 1875 to 1877. "In Town Meetings he was a power---clear-sighted, earnest, wise and strong," noted his contemporary, historian J. P. C. Winship.<sup>39</sup>

The other members of the this group of political entrepreneurs were slaughterhouse proprietors. Horace W. Baxter had come to Brighton from Weymouth, Massachusetts about 1850. His economic rise had been rapid, and by 1856 he was able to build an elaborate mansion on Foster Street. In 1858 he stood 19th among Brighton taxpayers. Prior to his 1869 election to the Board of Selectmen, however, Baxter had held only one town post---that of Assessor. In the 1870 town election he received all but two of the 123 votes cast, indicating that he enjoyed much broader support than Ricker or Jordan.<sup>40</sup>

Horace W. Jordan, born in 1825, arrived in Brighton from Maine in the early 1840s. By 1860 he was operating a slaughtering facility on land adjacent to

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<sup>38</sup> Warren's Democratic Party affiliation helped him maintain his domination of town politics. Typically, Brighton supported Democratic candidates over their Republican rivals by a ratio of about six to four.

<sup>39</sup> Winship, vol. 1: 187-188.

<sup>40</sup> Winship, vol. 1: 222; Brighton Town Records, vol. 4: 450.

his residence on Washington Street near the Brookline boundary. His slaughterhouse employed six men and produced about \$100,000 of goods a year. Jordan emerged politically in the mid-1860s. In 1865 he was chosen State Representative. By 1872, he ranked 39th among Brighton taxpayers. Winship described him as "a leading power in the town."<sup>41</sup>

In sum, these five architects of the 1870 to 1874 suburbanization initiative were long-term residents, owners of substantial real property, and men who earned much of their income within the town. Only one of them, Warren, was a commuter, but even he earned much of his income from Brighton serving as counsel for both the town government and its businessmen. In the period 1870 to 1873 the town paid Warren's legal firm more than \$9,000 in fees.<sup>42</sup>

In the spring of 1870, Brighton's three Selectmen, acting in a private capacity, secured legislative approval of an act establishing the Butchers Slaughtering and Melting Association (BSMA), a corporation empowered to build and operate an abattoir in Brighton. The corporation's capital stock was to consist of \$200,000. The bill also authorized the State Board of Health to order into the abattoir any butchering establishment located within a six mile radius of Faneuil Hall whose practices it deemed "injurious to the public health." The bill, based upon the recommendations of the State Board of Health, won quick

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<sup>41</sup> U. S. Census, 1845, Brighton; U.S. Census, 1870, Population Schedule, Brighton; U. S. Census, 1860, Industrial Schedule, Brighton; Wightman, Plan of the Town of Brighton, 1866; Brighton Town Records, vol. 4: 271; Winship, vol. 2: 123.

<sup>42</sup> Brighton, Official Reports for 1870-71 (Boston, 1871) 20, 22 and 29-30; Brighton, Official Reports for 1871-72 (Boston, 1872) 52-55 and 60; Brighton, Official Reports for 1872-73, 82, 89-90, 94 and 99; Brighton, Official Reports for 1873-74, 20, 22 and 24.

enactment. Significantly, no Brighton slaughterhouse proprietors actively opposed the legislation, possibly because they regarded the abattoir venture as unlikely to succeed.<sup>43</sup>

Brighton's slaughterhouse proprietors (apart from the incorporators) refused to buy stock in the abattoir corporation. The changes which the legislation authorized, they believed, imposed an unfair and unnecessary burden upon an industry that had generated prosperity for Brighton for almost a century. In their view the bad smells and other inconveniences associated with the slaughtering industry was the price Brighton paid for its economic vitality.

This refusal to invest in BSMA stock prompted the legislature to adopt a second act in April 1871, giving local governments and the State Board sweeping authority over the slaughterhouses. The new legislation provided that in future no slaughtering facility might be built or expanded in any Massachusetts town containing four thousand or more inhabitants (Brighton's 1870 population stood at just under 5,000), without the approval of its town government, in Brighton's case the abattoir incorporators. It also gave the State Board the power to close down slaughterhouses that it considered offensive, following a public hearing.<sup>44</sup>

While the new law greatly strengthened the hand of the abattoir incorporators, the slaughterhouse proprietors continued to withhold financial support from the project. A vigorous application of the powers conferred by the second abattoir act was required to secure their cooperation. On May 8, 1871 an

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<sup>43</sup> Massachusetts, Annual Report of the State Board of Health for 1871, 227-229.

<sup>44</sup> Massachusetts, Annual Report of the State Board of Health for 1871, 229-231.

inspection of the slaughterhouses of Brighton was made by the State Board. On May 19 it summoned the Brighton butchers to a special meeting at the State House at which "An Address to the Butchers of Brighton and Other Persons" was read to them by Secretary Derby:

We have invited you to meet us on this occasion in an entirely friendly spirit. We do so in the hope that you and others who may be willing to unite with you for the common good may be able to attain all the ends aimed at by the two acts. These acts have imposed on this Board important duties, and unless you are willing to cooperate with us they will bear painfully on you.

Derby then presented the Brighton butchers with an ultimatum. The board's recent examination of the slaughterhouses, he declared, had shown that every Brighton slaughterhouse was in violation of the Act of 1871 and therefore subject to closure. The proprietors could avoid that course of action only by "carrying out the provisions of the charter granted last year for erecting suitable buildings for slaughtering."<sup>45</sup>

Derby then invited a delegation of Brighton proprietors to join him in an inspection of the New York abattoir.<sup>46</sup> The board apparently hoped that this visit would serve to convert participants, who would then presumably return to Brighton to plead the abattoir case to their colleagues. What the inspection elicited instead, however, was a petition "signed by sixteen of the leading

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<sup>45</sup> Massachusetts, Annual Report of the State Board of Health for 1871, 232.

<sup>46</sup> It is unclear from the available records which butchers visited the New York abattoir, but the delegation of five was drawn from the participants at the May 19 State House meeting, identified as "Messrs Taylor, Jackson, Ward, Hollis, Dyer, Jordan, Rice, Saunders, Upton, and others." Massachusetts, Annual Report of the State Board of Health for 1871, 232.

Brighton butchers, in which mention was made of numerous changes in the methods of carrying on the business which they proposed to make, if the board would allow them to go on in the same buildings."<sup>47</sup> The petition, claiming to speak for the "butchering fraternity and those connected with them constituting a large proportion of the aggregate population" of Brighton, contended that the slaughtering industry as constituted did not seriously threaten public health; that persons who settled in Brighton knew that slaughtering was the chief business of the town and were prepared to tolerate the minor inconveniences associated with that trade; and that occasional bad smells in no way justified this assault upon the sanctity of private property---"the compulsory abandonment of the property of the undersigned and the discontinuance of their business or its immediate consolidation under a plan which does not meet their approval."<sup>48</sup>

The State Board summarily rejected this proposal as "not...in any way satisfactory to the general public." Then, after conducting the public hearings required by law, it ordered sixteen of Brighton's slaughterhouses shut down. This energetic application of state authority served to bring around all but a handful of the proprietors. Reduced to a choice between backing the BSMA or being put out of business they began buying up the abattoir stock. While the identity of the original BMSA stockholders is unknown, it can be inferred from the signatures appearing on an 1873 petition asking the town to lend its credit to the abattoir project. The signers included John Warren Hollis, Nathaniel Jackson, Samuel S.

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<sup>47</sup> Massachusetts, Annual Report of the State Board of Health for 1878 (Boston, 1879) 4-5.

<sup>48</sup> Massachusetts, Annual Report of the State Board of Health for 1871, 237.

Larnard, Jacob F. Taylor, Edward C. Sparhawk, Nathan Saunders, Horace W. Baxter, Horace W. Jordan, Charles Dana, Charles White, George W. Hollis, and David Collins, Brighton's wealthiest cattle dealers and slaughterhouse proprietors. The aggregate property holdings of these twelve men in 1872 totalled \$1,050,056.<sup>49</sup>

The Butchers' Slaughtering & Melting Association faced one more major hurdle, however, a proposal to establish a rival abattoir, which arose in early 1872. The prime movers in this scheme were George Upton and Benjamin F. Shaw, owners of a rendering and super-phosphate works that was situated on the northern side of Western Avenue near the Charles River. The Upton & Shaw works manufactured glue stock and oil from the heads and feet of slaughtered animals as well as bone fertilizer. In his 1866 report, Dr. Clark had described their establishment as "a most disagreeable and unhealthy place."<sup>50</sup>

In 1871, shortly after the legislature passed the second Abattoir Act, Upton & Shaw petitioned the Brighton Board of Selectmen for permission to expand its rendering plant. Their request was denied on the grounds that the carting of animal heads and feet through the streets of the town constituted a serious health hazard that would discourage desirable development in the northeastern corner of the town:

Messrs Upton & Co. must rely for material upon dead animals and bones brought from Boston and other towns. The carting of these things would be

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<sup>49</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 24, 27 February 1873; Brighton, Official Reports for 1872-73, 154-177.

<sup>50</sup> Brighton, Inspection of the Slaughterhouses, 11; Brighton Bone-Phosphate (Boston: Upton, Shaw & Co., 1872) 3.

a nuisance in our streets and in Cambridge, one which we had no right by our action, to impose upon our citizens or upon those of neighboring places. The marsh land, as soon as diked out, will be wanted for more reputable purposes. The existence of such a business could not fail to be a serious annoyance, and injury to the property of persons living and owning land near it.<sup>51</sup>

Thus the Selectmen's refusal to allow Upton & Shaw to expand its operation was based on the threat it posed to public health and to the development potential of the surrounding neighborhood.

At this point, Upton, Shaw and six associates petitioned the legislature to incorporate the Massachusetts Abattoir Company, to be situated anywhere within a twenty-five mile radius of Boston, which of course included Brighton.<sup>52</sup> While the Massachusetts Abattoir Company projectors claimed in subsequent testimony that they were acting in behalf of Brighton's smaller butchers, there is no evidence whatever to support the claim. None of the eight would-be incorporators was a local slaughterhouse owner. The only Brighton property owners among its sponsors, Upton and Shaw, were nonresidents who owned local property worth only \$35,000. In addition, no supporting petitions seem to exist.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Brighton's rejection of Upton & Shaw's petition came at a time when the City of Boston was investigating the introduction into the city's markets of unwholesome meat from Brighton. Brighton, Official Reports for 1871-72, 75; Boston, Report on the Sale of Bad Meat in Boston, City Document No. 74 (Boston, 1871) 3.

<sup>52</sup> Boston Daily Advertiser, 28 March 1872: 8.

<sup>53</sup>Arguments Before the Joint Committee on Mercantile Affairs...for an Act to Incorporate the Massachusetts Abattoir Company, April 25, 1872 (Boston, 1872); Brighton, Official Reports for 1872-73, 154-177.

The BSMA's supporters responded by calling a special town meeting on January 10, 1872, asking "that the town remonstrate against the granting of any Act of Incorporation to Alanson Long, George Upton and others which shall authorize the establishment of an abattoir and rendering tanks by them in the town of Brighton." William Wirt Warren represented the BSMA at this meeting, while Henry Baldwin, another Brighton attorney, spoke for the projectors of the Massachusetts Abattoir Company.

To the extent that William Wirt Warren had a serious political rival it was Henry Baldwin. The Baldwin family had been identified with the town for decades. Three sons of Captain Thaddeus Baldwin of Phillipson, Massachusetts had settled in Brighton between 1815 and 1817. The youngest, Life Baldwin, Henry's father, was the town's leading banker, serving as President of the Brighton Market Bank from 1854 to 1878. Born in 1834, Henry attended Brighton High School (where he was a classmate of William Wirt Warren), Yale College, and Harvard Law School. He was admitted to the practice of law in 1858. In 1861, he married Harriet Hollis, daughter of John Warren Hollis, one of Brighton's wealthiest residents and the dominant figure in the sheep slaughtering business.<sup>54</sup>

The Warren-Baldwin rivalry was multi-faceted. They competed for legal business. They competed politically. Warren was a Democrat; Baldwin a Republican. Warren's faction dominated town politics, while Baldwin's scored its successes primarily at the state level, where the Republican Party was in the

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<sup>54</sup> Brighton Messenger, 9 November 1872: 2; Winship, vol. 1: 111; Brighton Town Records, vol. 4: 490; Winship, vol. 1: 117; Winship, vol. 2: 163; Winship, vol. 1: 112.

majority. The Baldwin faction included some of Brighton's largest slaughterhouse proprietors (three of them, Nathaniel Jackson, Jacob F. Taylor and John Warren Hollis, alone controlling over \$400,000 in local real estate), and after 1872 some of the town's wealthiest commuters. As a group they tended to be more respectful of property rights than the Warren faction, which more readily embraced the use of government power to achieve desired economic ends. A number of Baldwin's associates were associated with the evangelical church, with nativism, and with temperance advocacy, which made it more difficult for them to collaborate with Brighton's Irish Catholic voters.

"If it was desired to oppose the scheme" Baldwin asserted in his defense of the Massachusetts Abattoir proposal, "it ought to be done individually, before the Legislature, and not by the town's interference." The town, he contended, had no business "granting a monopoly to the Butchers' Slaughtering and Melting Association," nor was it in the town's best interest to do so.

The Butchers' Slaughtering and Melting Association may be a great benefit to the town, but it will settle the fact that Brighton is to be a great slaughtering place, and it is in the interest of the heavy slaughterers against the smaller ones, who would be powerless in the matter of prices. The petition for an incorporation ought not to be fought by the town in its corporate capacity but by the parties in interest before the Legislative Committee. It would be well for the interest of the town to have two corporations to compete with each other. The company objected to had not offended the public health more than the butcher's generally, and...they would not at all by their new process.

In responding Warren pointed out that the projectors of the Massachusetts Abattoir Company were "residents of Essex County, and had no interest in the town outside of this business," whereas the article to oppose the plan "was introduced at the request of twenty prominent citizens of the easterly section of

Brighton that had been disturbed for years by the bone factory on River Street [Western Avenue]." He noted that Upton & Shaw was under an injunction from both the Town and the State Board of Health and "had greatly misrepresented the condition of affairs and had made false promises when complained of. How could they be trusted to make an abattoir and rendering tanks in the town?," he asked. As to Baldwin's request that the town remain neutral on the question, Warren pointed out that failure to adopt the proffered resolutions would lead the sponsors of the Massachusetts Abattoir Company to claim "that the town was not opposed to the petition for a new rendering establishment."<sup>55</sup>

The resolutions were then adopted "almost unanimously" and a committee of three appointed to carry the town's remonstrance to the legislature. Warren was asked to serve, but declined. As finally constituted, the body included two Republicans and a Democrat---Isaac Pratt, Jr., Henry Claflin, and Willian C. Strong, all advocates of residential development. Claflin was a merchant and a Boston commuter who lived on Washington Hill near the Newton boundary.<sup>56</sup>

On April 25, 1872, attorneys for the proposed Massachusetts Abattoir Company and the Butcher's Slaughtering & Melting Association engaged in a lively debate before the legislature's Joint Committee on Mercantile Affairs. G. A. Somerby, attorney for the petitioners, charged that the Butchers' Slaughtering & Melting Association constituted a monopoly controlled by unscrupulous men intent on destroying their rivals by the use of regulatory powers.

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<sup>55</sup> Boston Evening Traveller, 11 January 1872: 1.

<sup>56</sup> Brighton Town Records, vol. 4: 546-547.

If the Board of Health say we must stop [independent slaughtering], give us a chance to choose between two abattoirs, and let them both be under the Board of Health. Let them compete, and let us pay as little as we can. Give us a chance to live, that is all we ask, gentlemen. Don't narrow this business down to one small set of men."<sup>57</sup> (emphasis in original)

William Wirt Warren made three major points in his rebuttal. First, he argued that the best interests of Brighton and nearby towns required the establishment of an abattoir.

What community would stand having from two to five thousand acres of its best land entirely prevented from occupancy because there are forty or fifty slaughterhouses dotted here and there over it, which made the atmosphere a nuisance, so that you could not live there?

Second, he maintained that the facility operated by the Butchers' Slaughtering & Melting Association would be open to all without favor. Finally, he asserted that the projectors of the Massachusetts Abattoir Company---who he described as "certain bone-boilers, certain hotel keepers, and certain speculators"---did not speak for the small butchers at all, and were less interested in promoting competition than in preventing the capitalization of any abattoir so that they might continue to engage in rendering activities in the old way.<sup>58</sup>

Warren and his associates succeeded in defeating the rival abattoir proposal. In May 1872, the legislature denied incorporation to the Massachusetts Abattoir Company, thereby giving the BSMA an effective monopoly over the slaughtering industry of the Boston area.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Arguments Before the Joint Committee on Mercantile Affairs, 13-14.

<sup>58</sup> Arguments Before the Joint Committee on Mercantile Affairs, 21-23.

<sup>59</sup> Brighton Messenger, 4 May 1872: 2; Brighton Messenger, 11 May 1872:

The completed Butchers' Slaughtering & Melting Association facility, which was constructed in 1872 and 1873, resembled an industrial village. The sixty-acre complex had one thousand feet of frontage on the Charles River, allowing schooners and sloops to tie up at its wharves. Its buildings included a large rendering house and fourteen slaughterhouses, ten of which were arranged under one continuous roof. Under the building ran a cement cellar in which the blood, tallow, feet, offal and other portions of the slaughtered animals were allowed to accumulate in iron wheelbarrows, which were taken to the rendering houses to be transformed into oil, tallow, and fertilizer.<sup>60</sup>

Independent butchering activities did not disappear from Brighton at once, however, for the abattoir was at first incapable of accommodating all of the town's slaughtering activities. Additional structures having been added by May 1875, however, the State Board of Health ordered the closing of the last eight independent slaughterhouses. By the end of November 1875, independent slaughtering activities in Brighton had ceased.<sup>61</sup>

Meanwhile, the Boston & Albany Railroad began buying up land near the abattoir for a giant stockyard. The possibility of moving the Brighton Center cattle yards to North Brighton had been mentioned as early as 1871. In early March 1873 the Brighton Messenger carried a notice of a public hearing, to be

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<sup>60</sup> Massachusetts, Fifth Annual Report of the Massachusetts State Board of Health, January, 1874 (Boston, 1874) 164-169; Description of the Brighton Abattoir and the Animal Fertilizer Made by the Butcher's Slaughtering and Melting Association (Boston, n.d.) 2.

<sup>61</sup> Brighton Messenger, 13 June 1874: 2; Massachusetts, Report of the State Board of Health, January, 1877 (Boston, 1877) 392.

held at the Brighton Depot, to discuss "damages for certain lands in the vicinity of the Depot wanted...for cattle yards, which it is said the road contemplates establishing near the Depot next summer," and by 1881 all Brighton's stockyard facilities had been consolidated on a site adjacent to the abattoir and the depot.<sup>62</sup>

These measures contributed to residential development of the town in three ways: they opened up hundreds of acres of previously fouled land for residential development, made Brighton a healthier community, and shifted the locus of much of the town's disorderly behavior away from Brighton Center. The town's mortality rate had been relatively high before 1872. By 1877 Brighton would become the second healthiest district of Boston (after the Back Bay), with a mortality rate of only 15.8 per thousand. The death rate in Brookline in 1878 (the 1877 figures not being available) stood at a roughly equivalent 13.3 per thousand. While "formerly objectionable on account of its numerous slaughterhouses," the State Board reported in 1878, Brighton was "now in most respects desirable for residences."<sup>63</sup>

The second major reform initiative of the 1870-74 period, equally critical to attracting middle and upper class residents, were massive improvements in the town's infrastructure, which were undertaken at the urging of the Warren faction. The transition to a residentially-oriented policy was accomplished with remarkable speed and minimal opposition because, as in the case of Brookline, it served the interests of all the key elements of Brighton's population. These

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<sup>62</sup> Brighton Messenger, 2 September 1871: 2; Brighton Messenger, 1 March 1873: 2; Boston City Directory, 1881.

<sup>63</sup> Massachusetts, First Annual Report of the Massachusetts State Board of Health, January 1870, 24; Massachusetts, Annual Report of the State Board of Health, January 1878 (Boston, 1878) 391-392.

public works projects furnished the glue which Warren and his associates used to unite the town's major landowners, its commuter element, and its Irish voters, in a pro-growth coalition that dominated town meetings and ultimately delivered Brighton to Boston.

In 1870, Brighton as a whole was lacking in good roads, sewerage, and street lighting, all essential prerequisites to residential development. The town's highways were in especially poor condition owing to the unusually heavy use they received from those engaged in the cattle and slaughtering trades.

In few, if any, towns are the the highways subjected to so constant and so hard wear as in Brighton [the Selectmen noted in 1870]. The amount of heavy teaming is enormous. At the same time, we suppose a very large proportion of the pleasure travel from Boston passes through our town. To render our roads safe and convenient for lighter vehicles, we must keep smooth and in constant repair the surface which the large wagons wear off so fast.<sup>64</sup>

No single facet of the reform initiative reflected Brighton's fundamental reorientation more dramatically than this massive investment in street construction and other infrastructure improvements, an investment that increased in each year from 1870 to 1873. The biggest 1870 projects involved the widening of the entire length of Cambridge Street from Brighton Center to the Charles River, at a cost of \$38,182.92, and the installation of a drain on Washington Street in Brighton Center, where flooding had long been a problem.<sup>65</sup>

The Cambridge Street and Washington Street appropriations of 1870 and 1871 were made not only for the benefit of private conveyances but also to

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<sup>64</sup> Brighton, Official Reports for 1870-71, 67.

<sup>65</sup> Brighton, Official Reports for 1870-71, 21-23.

accommodate two major public transportation projects that it was hoped would foster an influx of commuters into the sections of town that were being cleared of slaughterhouse and cattle yard facilities. The Union Railway Company, a horse railroad, had asked Brighton for permission to run a line up the center of Cambridge and Washington Streets through the center of the town and into Newton.

It seemed essential to fix the grade with great care [the Selectmen observed], since the vote of the town to require the horse-railway track to be placed in the centre of the road, and the generally permanent character of the repairs in contemplation, would make it very difficult to materially alter the grades hereafter.<sup>66</sup>

The second transportation project involved a scheme (which never came to fruition) to build a second railroad through Brighton. In January 1871 Warren, Ricker, Jordan, Wilson, and sixty-four other residents petitioned the legislature for the incorporation of the Newton & Brighton Branch Railway to construct a railroad that would extend from the Allston Depot through the very center of Brighton, paralleling Cambridge and Washington Streets. Most of the signers of this petition, it should be noted, were residents of the more remote central and western sections of the town, where the need for transportation improvements was greatest. Of the seventeen west Brighton residents who paid the highest taxes, ten signed the the Newton & Brighton Railway petition.<sup>67</sup> Even more significantly, 53 percent of its signers were cattle dealers or slaughterhouse

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<sup>66</sup> Brighton, Report of the Selectmen, Surveyors of Highways, and Overseers of the Poor, for the Year Ending January 31, 1871 (Boston, 1871) 67.

<sup>67</sup> Massachusetts, Acts of 1871, Chapter 228, Legislative Packet; U.S. Census, 1870, Population Schedule, Brighton.

proprietors, evidencing a willingness on their part to collaborate with the Warren faction on other aspects of the suburbanizing initiative even while opposing the abattoir scheme. Of the \$1.3 million in Brighton real estate owned by the signers, 72 percent belonged to cattle dealers and slaughterhouse proprietors.<sup>68</sup>

The railroad proposal scored some successes in its early stages. In April 1871 the legislature incorporated Wilson, Ricker, Warren and their associates as the Brighton Branch Railroad Company, with the authority to sell \$200,000 of stock and to construct a line from the Allston Depot, through the center of Brighton, and "thence to a convenient point on the Boston and Albany Railroad between the Brighton and Newton Stations." The corporation was authorized to lease the completed facilities to the railroad. Unless the project was completed within two years, however, the act of incorporation would expire.<sup>69</sup>

The following February, the legislature passed an additional act giving the railroad corporation, under the name Brighton & Newton Railroad Company, the right to extend its line another ten miles through Newton into Needham, as well as the authority to issue as much as \$1 million in stock.<sup>70</sup> As the Messenger noted in January 1873, "By this plan the Boston & Albany Railroad would obtain much needed additional facilities, with a saving of about a mile in distance, while a large amount of land on the line of the proposed road would find its way into the market at largely advanced prices." The paper also reported that discussions

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<sup>68</sup> Massachusetts, Acts of 1871, Chapter 228, Legislative Packet; Brighton, Official Reports for 1872-73, 153-177.

<sup>69</sup> Massachusetts, Acts of 1871, Chapter 228.

<sup>70</sup> Massachusetts, Acts of 1872, Chapter 99.

with the B & A and an "eminent" contractor were well advanced.<sup>71</sup> On March 12, 1873, the Messenger reported that the proposed railroad would

leave the Boston & Albany road at Cottage Farm station, striking in a southwesterly direction, coming through the Valley, so called, in Brighton, near the rear of the Brighton Hotel, passing between Newton and Newton Centre, between the Upper Falls and West Newton, and thence on to Grantville. If carried on as contemplated, it will be a great accomodation to the residents of Brighton Centre, in particular, who are obliged now to walk nearly a mile to take the steam cars; besides, it will greatly enhance the value of land in the section through which it is intended to pass.<sup>72</sup>

The Cambridge Street improvements, which bore a \$38,000 price tag, represented an enormous investment in 1870, some three times more than the town had spent on all street repair in the previous year, and one-half of what it collected annually in property taxes. It entailed cutting down a hill between the Allston Depot and Union Square. Cambridge Street was ballasted with stone and heavily macadamized. "Few, if any, roads in the vicinity of Boston can be said to be better made," the Selectmen declared. The town's total expenditure for 1870, \$212,177.89, represented a 55 percent increase over the 1869 figure. The town's debt increased correspondingly---by 50.9 percent---rising from \$88,507.77 to \$133,587.65.<sup>73</sup>

Street construction continued to be the primary expenditure in 1871, 1872, and 1873 with the bulk of the money now going to the improvement of streets in the central or western sections of Brighton. As nearly as can be determined from

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<sup>71</sup> Brighton Messenger, 18 January 1873: 2.

<sup>72</sup> Brighton Messenger, 8 March 1873: 2.

<sup>73</sup> Brighton, Official Reports for 1870-71, 68; Brighton, Official Reports for 1869-70, 19-20.

the town reports of the period, about eighty percent of the sum expended on streets, sewerage, and lighting improvements in 1870 to 1873 was spent in the central and western sections of Brighton. Major expenditures included over \$50,000 for the improvement of Washington Street, \$45,000 for Chestnut Hill Avenue, \$70,000 for Market Street, \$23,000 for Foster Street, and \$19,000 for Winship and Union Streets, all of which were located in the more westerly sections of town. Moreover, the money spent in the Allston section went largely to major thoroughfares like Cambridge Street, Allston Street, Lincoln Street, and Western Avenue that commuters living in the more westerly part of town were obliged to use when traveling to the city.<sup>74</sup>

Brighton also spent substantial sums on public facilities in 1872 and 1873, a total of \$222,000. These projects included a new engine house, costing \$64,247.58, a grammar school, costing \$38,048.42, and a public library, costing \$33,337.50.<sup>75</sup> These three elaborate structures, which flanked a triangular common just outside of Brighton Center, later named Wilson Park, formed a particularly attractive Victorian Gothic ensemble which reflected the town's new residential aspirations. Just a decade earlier cattle pens had occupied the site.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Brighton, Official Reports for 1870-71, 20-25; Brighton, Official Reports for 1871-72, 70-73 and 51-55; Brighton, Official Reports for 1872-73, 88-92; Brighton, Official Reports for 1873-74, 29-31.

<sup>75</sup> Brighton, Official Reports for 1872-73, 97-98; Brighton, Official Reports for 1873-74, 36-37.

<sup>76</sup> The Item, April 20, 1912: 1.

In 1875 the Messenger described the Wilson Park area as "adding much to the substantial appearance of this wide-awake section."<sup>77</sup>

Significantly, the lots on which all three of these buildings were constructed were sold to the town by leaders of either the Warren or Baldwin factions. The fire station and grammar school lots were purchased from George A. Wilson and Benjamin F. Ricker for \$7,904.00 and \$12,824.50 respectively, while the the public library lot was bought from Life Baldwin for \$18,000. The latter purchase was made in mid-1873, at about the time the town retained Henry Baldwin to speak for annexation before the legislature, and was probably acquired as part of a political bargain between the two factions.<sup>78</sup>

The most extravagant expenditure of the 1872 to 1874 period, however, was the purchase from George A. Wilson of the old Brighton Hotel for the huge sum of \$74,300. The land was supposedly purchased as a site for a new town hall. Since the town had already formally endorsed annexation, this explanation seems doubtful.<sup>79</sup>

Brighton borrowed nearly a million dollars in the 1870 to 1873 period to fund these infrastructure improvements. The town's leaders showed little concern for the long-term implications of this heavy borrowing. Not only did Brighton not raise taxes to meet this greatly increased level of expenditure, it actually reduced them. In the year 1870-71 the town took in \$78,822.00, based

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<sup>77</sup> Brighton Messenger, 27 February 1875: 2.

<sup>78</sup> Brighton, Official Reports for 1872-73, 100; Brighton, Official Reports for 1873-74, 28.

<sup>79</sup> Brighton, Official Reports for 1873-74, 25.

on a \$13 per thousand property tax. Three years later, in 1873-74, it raised \$132,232.48, based on a much lower \$9.10 per thousand tax, "the lowest rate levied in the vicinity of Boston," according to the Messenger.

These measures had the anticipated effect. Landowners saw the value of their property escalate. By 1871 outsiders were showing a heightened interest in Brighton property. On March 23, 1872 the Messenger observed: "In Brighton last year large sums were made by operators in landed property."<sup>80</sup> Non-resident property ownership, which had stood at a mere 10.5 percent in 1863, rose to 24.5 percent by 1872. The largest non-resident landholder, with \$391,000 in property, was the Boston & Albany Railroad. However, the second and fourth largest non-resident owners were developers----George Gerrish of Chelsea and George Sparhawk of Weston. Gerrish owned \$244,350 of property in the northwestern corner of the town where he was laying out the "Village of Faneuil" on land adjacent to the newly-established Faneuil Depot. Sparhawk, who had inherited the northern half of the old Sparhawk Estate from his father, held property worth \$108,000, which he had subdivided for residential development.<sup>81</sup>

In the 1870 to 1873 period as a whole, the town's debt rose from a modest \$88,509.77 to a staggering \$712,895.61, an eightfold increase. While Brighton collected less than \$500,000 in taxes in this four year period, it expended about \$1.5 million. A sizeable part of this massive expenditure had to be earmarked, moreover, to meet the rapidly mounting town debt. In 1873 Brighton spent a total

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<sup>80</sup> Brighton, Official Reports for 1869-70, 38; Brighton Messenger, 31 August 1873: 2; Brighton Messenger, 16 August 1873: 2; Brighton Messenger, 23 March 1872: 2.

<sup>81</sup> Brighton, Auditor's Report for 1864, 70; Brighton, Official Reports for 1871-72, 153; Brighton Messenger, 15 February 1873: 2; Winship, vol. 1: 173.

of \$619,415.97 of which \$114,856.76, or 18.5 percent, was applied to the debt, an amount equivalent to 87 percent of the year's tax receipts.<sup>82</sup>

The same group of men who took control of Brighton's government in 1870, who forced the town's butchers into the abattoir, and pushed through the transportation and public facilities improvements of the 1870 to 1873 period---Warren, Ricker, Jordan, and Wilson---also masterminded Brighton's annexation to Boston. Other towns embraced annexation in the hope that it would lead to infrastructure improvements and expanded services. Brighton, by contrast, introduced the massive improvements while independent, then sought annexation to escape the tax consequences of that spending.

The legislative history of the annexation movement began on February 11, 1870, with the filing of the "Six-Mile Bill," which called for the annexation by Boston of all territory on the southerly side of the Charles River within a six mile radius of Boston City Hall, an area that included Brighton, Brookline and West Roxbury. The Warren faction played no role whatever in the drafting of this legislation, which was filed before either Ricker or Jordan became Selectmen, and before Warren's election to the State Senate. There was, however, substantial Brighton support for the measure when it came before the legislature's Committee on Cities and Towns in April 1870.

One of the attorneys for the petitioners was Brighton's Henry Baldwin. Several Brighton residents spoke in favor of the bill. Most of these supporters lived in Allston and had no direct connection to the cattle and slaughtering trades.

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<sup>82</sup> Brighton, Official Reports for 1870-71, 29 and 33.

George F. Homer of Brookline, attorney for the remonstrants, declared that "the petitioners for this measure were almost entirely citizens of Brighton."<sup>83</sup>

Most of the testimony given by Brighton residents at the hearing focused upon the depressing effects Brighton's unhealthy slaughtering practices were having on local land values.<sup>84</sup> Thomas W. Silloway, a leading Boston architect who resided in Allston, noted, "fine land can be had in Brighton, so far as good air, good earth, opportunities for drainage..., good views, etc., are concerned, for three cents a foot. Land further out, in Newton, similarly situated, costs .20 or .25." Silloway complained that scant progress had been made in introducing the kind of improvements that would raise land values and encourage residential development---the construction of wider streets, the installation of drainage facilities, and the provision of clean water. The town's politically inept Board of Selectmen deserved much of the blame for this state of affairs, he asserted. Temporary residents often determined public policy in Brighton, according to Silloway, to the detriment of its permanent residents and its major landowners.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Boston Evening Traveler, 14 April 1870: 1.

<sup>84</sup> The following quotations were taken from the summaries of the testimony that appeared in the pages of the Boston Traveler.

<sup>85</sup> The Selectmen elected in 1869 demonstrated their political ineptness in early 1870 in the case of the expansion of the Riverside Trotting Park. The race track had been established in 1864. In 1869 non-resident businessman John A. Sawyer purchased it for \$39,000, and immediately sought permission to expand the facility. This proposal aroused considerable opposition from Brighton landowners, who hired William Wirt Warren and Edward Dexter Sohier (a prominent Boston attorney and Allston resident) to represent them at a public hearing before the Board of Selectmen held on January 5 and 7, 1870. The first day was spent hearing from eight local landowners who supported what Sawyer was proposing, believing that the Riverside Park expansion would increase the value of their property. On January 7 the opponents responded. Warren, in his opening remarks, noted that "the names of the men signing the remonstrance

There should be at once means taken to prevent the laying out of narrow streets. There is no system of drainage for slaughter houses, and the water is bad in some of the best localities. The water of Chestnut Hill is needed for both purposes. The Selectmen cannot control the question that is presented. The slaughter houses could be so arranged as to be in no way offensive. Annexation will increase the value of land, and that induces landowners to lay out streets of decent width so as to sell better the adjoining lots.

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represented about a million and a half of taxable real estate in the town, or about one-fourth of the total taxable valuation," while the eight landowners who had testified in favor of the proposal owned property valued at only \$300,000. He contended that an immense amount of injury would be done Brighton by the proposed expansion. It would "depreciate the value of real estate, and the associations connected with the park would drive away the residents from their valuable estates to other towns, which would deprive the town of a larger amount of taxes than would ever be received from the park." Most of the testimony against the park emphasized the themes of property depreciation and "social annoyances." Crowds of 10,000 to 12,000 would be drawn into Brighton on racing days, it was maintained. Two State Police detectives testified that "a large number of professional gamblers and pickpockets were in the habit of visiting Riverside" and that "if a mile track were licensed there it would draw a larger attendance of all classes of people than it had previously done. Gambling implements had been seized by them at Riverside," they noted.

The Selectmen rejected Sawyer's petition, but that did not settle the matter. In later testimony before the legislature's Committee on Towns William C. Strong, Brighton's leading horticulturalist, noted that "the selectmen refused to allow the race course there, but a town meeting was called which included all the roughs of the town, and it required the selectmen to locate the park." After electing Life Baldwin its Moderator, the town meeting approved the expansion of the trotting park by a margin of 149 to 41 votes.

The Riverside Park episode provides an insight into Brighton town politics in the late 1860s. Several of those who testified at the April 1870 legislative hearings on annexation described Brighton as "controlled by a floating population." Attendance at town meetings fluctuated very widely, depending on the magnitude of the issues to be considered and the organizational efforts of the contending interests. Control of these gatherings required careful management. The Riverside Park vote had been another defeat for those favoring residential over commercial development. Brighton Town Records, vol. 4: 450; Boston Traveler, 5 January 1870: 1; Boston Traveler, 10 January 1870: 2; Boston Traveler, 12 April 1870: 2; Brighton Town Records, vol. 4: 441-442; Boston Traveler, 2 May 1870: 1; Brighton Messenger, 17 February 1872: 2.

The town of Brighton is controlled by a floating population, but when a vote is taken on annexation all the permanent and respectable will come out and make an effort to carry it.

The control and concentration of slaughter houses, the increase of the police, the lighting of lamps, the supplying of Cochituate water, and central drains, will raise the value of property, and property owners will lay out broader streets to sell their lots better.<sup>86</sup>

Isaac Pratt, Jr. of Allston, a major Allston landowner, offered a similar analysis. Brighton contained large areas of undeveloped land, he pointed out. It was also conveniently situated for the would-be commuter and extremely well-served by existing transportation facilities. Allston Depot ridership had doubled since 1867. While he owned some \$150,000 of land in the town, there was great variation in value from location to location owing to the existence of nuisance industries and the lack of adequate infrastructure, and some of his property was worth only a quarter as much as other parcels. The improvements the city would introduce after annexation would, he believed, add fifty percent to the value of some of these parcels.

William C. Strong also complained of a lack of effective leadership in Brighton. "The town government is entirely inadequate to the wants of the place," he asserted, "and we would have a better government under Boston." Other Brighton residents who testified in favor of the Six Mile Bill made the same points. All agreed that Brighton's land values were depressed and that annexation would serve to raise them."<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Boston Traveler, 12 April 1870: 2.

<sup>87</sup> Boston Traveler, 12 April 1870: 2.

However, annexation failed in 1870. The legislature rejected the Six Mile Bill in late May and the annexation issue lay dormant for the next eighteen months.

By the time the annexation proposal reemerged in December 1871, the Warren faction had carried much of its infrastructure-building program to execution and the major obstacles impeding the construction of the abattoir had been removed. The renewed drive for annexation was signalled by a petition to the legislature, bearing thirty-seven Brighton names, which argued that comprehensive improvements could not be made without political consolidation--that the interests of both the inhabitants of Brighton and Boston

require that the territory of said Town, and the territory between said Town and the City of Boston, should be within the same corporate limits. It is for the interest of the whole community that the police regulations, the laying out and maintenance of highways, the health regulations, and the drainage and sewerage of the territory adjacent to Boston, on the southerly side of Charles River and easterly of the Chestnut Hill Reservoir should be under the control of the City of Boston.

Though it bore relatively few signatures, most of the signers were influential figures. They included George A. Wilson, under whose name both the 1872 and 1873 annexation bills would be filed, Senator Warren, and the members of the Board of Selectmen, Ricker, Jordan, and Patrick Moley, an Irishman elected in 1871 with the backing of the Warren forces. It is significant (indicative perhaps of a political falling out) that former Selectman Horace Baxter's name did not appear on this petition.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Brighton Town Records, vol. 4: 497-498.

In contrast to the 1870 annexation initiative, which had been led by Allston residents, the preponderance of signers of the 1871 petition resided in the central and western sections of the town. They included such major west Brighton landowners as Nathaniel Jackson of N. & S. Jackson Company, owners of a large parcel of land on Chestnut Hill Avenue, William C. Strong, who owned substantial acreage on Nonantum Hill, and George Hobart Brooks, owner of a large farm in the northwestern corner of town near the new Faneuil Railroad Depot. In addition, several of Brighton's leading Irish property owners---Selectman Moley, William Scollans, and Daniel McKenney---affixed their signatures. Significantly, the petition bore no Allston names whatever---not even those of men like Pratt and Silloway, who had spoken out so forcefully for annexation in the spring of 1870.<sup>89</sup>

On January 10, 1872, the town put itself on record as supporting annexation, at the same meeting called to deal with the Upton & Shaw proposal to expand its rendering plant. The pro-annexation resolutions, which William Wirt Warren offered, declared:

Whereas in the opinion of this meeting it is expedient that the line of the future boundary of the City of Boston should be fixed as soon as practicable; and whereas it seems certain that the territory on the southerly side of Charles River, as far at least as the tide ebbs and flows, must before long become a part of the City so as to be brought under a uniform system of streets and drainage and under the police and health regulations of the City: Therefore

Voted: That a committee of five be chosen by the Town to appear before the Committee of the Legislature and favor the passage of an act for the

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<sup>89</sup> Massachusetts, Acts of 1873, Chapter 303, Legislative Packet.

annexation of the Town of Brighton and other contiguous territory to the City of Boston.

Voted: That said Committee memorialize the City Council to lend their approval to the measure, and have authority to take such further steps, as they may deem proper to secure the necessary legislation on the subject.

In speaking in their behalf Warren asserted that Boston had fallen well behind Philadelphia and New York in the adoption of a "symmetrical plan of laying out the land prospectively." Other considerations warranting annexation, he added, included the need to provide uniform sewerage, police protection, and public health regulations.<sup>90</sup>

The only speaker who objected to the resolutions was Henry Baldwin, who as attorney for Upton & Shaw, had just been bested on the other issue of the meeting. Though not opposed to annexation in principle, noted Baldwin, he "did not believe the town could vote money to annihilate its existence, whatever his private opinion of the subject." Warren's resolutions were nonetheless adopted by a vote which the Boston Traveler described as "almost unanimous."<sup>91</sup>

On January 25, 1872 George A. Wilson and others filed legislation calling for the annexation of Brighton by Boston. Legislative hearings followed in March and April. Supporters had frequently claimed that Brighton's voters favored annexation overwhelmingly.<sup>92</sup> The absence of anti-annexation testimony at the April 1870 hearings lent credence to such claims, as did the town's virtually unanimous adoption of Warren's January 1872 resolutions. In February 1872,

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<sup>90</sup> Brighton Town Records, vol. 4: 547-548.

<sup>91</sup> Boston Traveler, 11 January 1872: 1.

<sup>92</sup> Boston Traveler, 12 April 1870: 2.

however, organized opposition emerged for the first time, in the form of a petition containing 171 signatures, which stated that

the further increase and centralization of political power in the City of Boston tends directly to lessen the responsibility of the citizens, and to foster corruption in the public body, and is fraught with danger to the Commonwealth by giving to one municipality an overwhelming influence over all others, and believing that the ancient landmarks of counties and towns should not be removed except for the strongest and clearest reasons.<sup>93</sup>

The signers of this anti-annexation petition were mostly residents of Allston. Heading the list was Abel F. Rice---a 37 year old North Allston strawberry farmer. Next came the Scott brothers---John, George, and James. Their father, John C. Scott, had settled in Brighton in 1840, after leaving the employ of the wealthy Peter Chardon Brooks, and had established a highly successful nursery and strawberry farm in North Allston, which his sons now operated.<sup>94</sup>

The most prominent signer of the petition, however, was George W. Hollis, Henry Baldwin's father-in-law, who resided near the Allston Depot. Hollis owned the largest sheep slaughtering business in the Boston area and was a major Allston landowner. His brother, E. A. Hollis, and his son and business partner, George Hollis, also signed.<sup>95</sup> Other leading signers included Edmund Rice, Jr., a West India goods merchant and former selectman, another major Allston

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<sup>93</sup> Massachusetts, Acts of 1873, Chapter 303, Legislative Packet.

<sup>94</sup> Winship, vol 2: 74 and 209; U. S. Census, 1870, Agricultural Schedule, Brighton.

<sup>95</sup> Winship, vol. 1: 116-118.

landowner, and Patrick Colby, a farmer who owned a sizeable tract at the northwest corner of North Harvard and Cambridge Streets in North Allston.<sup>96</sup>

The number of signatures is somewhat misleading. Seventy percent of the petition's signers, it should be noted, paid no real estate taxes whatever to the Town of Brighton. Nearly two-thirds were Irish, mostly laborers, many probably employees of the landowners and businessmen whose names headed the petition.

Thus by 1872 the advocates of annexation were predominately residents of the central and western sections of Brighton, while its opponents lived almost exclusively in the eastern, or Allston, section of the community. How are we to account for this dichotomy?

To understand the motives of the opponents of annexation, the date of the anti-annexation petition---February 1872---must be borne in mind. The town's major road building program was still in its early stages. Since Allston's residents were already well-served by the existing transportation system, they were understandably less supportive of large-scale spending on road construction than their neighbors to the west. The Boston & Albany Railroad ran through the center of the Allston section, as did the Union Street Railway line. A passenger boarding a Boston train at the Allston Depot, the hub of the neighborhood, could reach the Boston & Albany Depot on Lincoln Street in the downtown---some 5 miles away---in twenty minutes. The main western thoroughfare out of Boston, Beacon Street (today's Brighton Avenue and North Beacon Street), extended through the heart of Allston, providing convenient

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<sup>96</sup> Winship, vol. 2: 65 and 190-191; The Item, 26 May 1888: 1; U. S. Census, 1870, Agricultural Schedule, Brighton.

access to the city for those traveling by private conveyance. Much of the modest suburban development that the town had experienced to date was concentrated there. The obstacles to further development were therefore fewer in Allston than in the more westerly sections of the community. The primary impediment to the neighborhood's development were the slaughterhouses, which would soon be eliminated by the abattoir, then in the process of construction.

Moreover the Allston real estate market was healthier than that of the central and western sections of the town. In April 1872 the local paper took note of Allston's "active real estate market." The Messenger commented: "Notwithstanding the ground is still full of frost, and the winds cold, hardly a day passes without strangers making their appearance to look at land in Allston. It is hardly safe for a man to put a price on his land if he does not wish to sell it."<sup>97</sup> On June 1, 1872, George R. Hichborn & Co., auctioneers, disposed of ten Allston lots at prices ranging from 63 to 22 1/2 cents a square foot. "There was a large company present," the Messenger declared, and the sale was "one of the most successful ever held in Brighton." The 63 cent per square foot transaction, the paper announced subsequently, was "the highest price ever obtained for land in Brighton." By comparison land in the Oak Square and Nonantum Hill sections, in the western part of the town, was selling for prices ranging from 5 to 18 cents per square foot.<sup>98</sup>

Thus Allston already had what it needed for rapid residential development.

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<sup>97</sup> Brighton Messenger, 30 March 1872: 2; Brighton Messenger, 13 April 1872: 2.

<sup>98</sup> Brighton Messenger, 1 June 1872: 1; Brighton Messenger, 6 July 1872: 2.

Yet most of Allston's voters were eventually persuaded to support annexation. When the town voted on the issue in October, 1873, twenty months later, fewer than eighteen percent of its electors opposed the measure. The Allston section contained about one-third of the town's voters. Clearly the attitude of many of Allston's voters had changed in the intervening period. The town's mounting debt offers the most logical explanation for this shift of sentiment.

With two-thirds of Brighton's population living in the central and western sections of the community those areas dominated town elections. Of the fifty key town offices filled in these years (Selectmen, Town Treasurer, Assessors, and School Committeemen), forty-six went to residents of the central and western sections of the community. These neighborhoods had the power to push through major public works projects.

The public works expenditures, in turn, generated a huge debt which an independent Brighton would eventually have to pay. In February, 1872, when the residents of Allston signed the anti-annexation petition, the town's debt stood at only \$244,323.86. By October, 1873, when its voters formally approved annexation, it had reached a staggering \$712,895.61, an increase of 292 percent in a year and a half.<sup>99</sup>

The town's huge debt provided the Warren faction with an unanswerable argument for annexation. If Brighton spurned Boston, substantial tax increases would inevitably follow, necessitating a reduction of essential services. Growth would slow and property values decline. If, on the other hand, Boston absorbed

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<sup>99</sup> Brighton, Official Reports for 1871-72, iii; Brighton, Official Reports for 1873-74, 6.

Brighton, the city would also absorb this potentially crippling debt, and thus save Brighton from the painful consequences of four years of fiscal extravagance.

The movement to attach Brighton to Boston did not experience smooth sailing in the legislature, however. The outlying towns feared the political power of an enlarged Boston. Thus another two years were required to win legislative approval of an annexation act.

Legislative hearings were held on George A. Wilson's annexation bill in March and April 1872. Warren served as counsel for the petitioners, while its opponents were represented by Henry Baldwin. In his opening statement to the Committee on Cities and Towns, Warren reviewed the main arguments for annexation---the need for better roads, drainage, water supply, and police regulations. Weare D. Bickford testified that the January 10 town meeting, over which he had presided, had been well-attended and affirmed that the vote for annexation had been "nearly unanimous." Other pro-annexation speakers included Henry Claflin and Horace W. Jordan. Jordan dismissed the February 27, 1872 anti-annexation petition, claiming that it did not reflect the majority viewpoint, and charging that "one man [had gone] about town...getting 175 signatures...which cost him between \$400 and \$500."<sup>100</sup>

Henry Baldwin presented the opposition's case on March 14. The annexation petition should be rejected, he argued. He did not claim that the people of Brighton opposed the proposal, but rather that it "was not wanted by Boston, or if it was,...the city was not prepared to assume it at present," and that "Middlesex County, though not appearing formally to oppose, were against the

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<sup>100</sup> Boston Traveler, 1 March 1872: 2; Brighton Messenger, 9 March 1872: 2.

diminution in the county limits." He also claimed that a larger expenditure was being made on roads by Brighton than could be expected following annexation to Boston. Finally, he charged that annexation was the project of "landholders and speculators."<sup>101</sup> Surprisingly no resident of Brighton other than Baldwin spoke against the Wilson bill at these hearings, not even the sponsors of the February 27 petition, Abel F. Rice, the Scott brothers, and John Warren Hollis.<sup>102</sup>

The legislature took no action on annexation in 1872. Instead it referred Wilson's bill to the next session. It was now widely believed, however, that annexation was inevitable. In announcing its referral to the next session, the Messenger expressed the view that annexation was now "only a question of time." The Boston Globe had reached a similar conclusion: "It is probable that at the close of the next ten years we shall find all the present outlying territory, within a radius of five miles of City Hall, under one municipal corporation and government," the paper declared.<sup>103</sup>

The strength of the anti-annexation movement peaked in late 1872, when Brighton adopted a resolution reaffirming its support of annexation, but only by a relatively narrow margin of 84 to 62 votes.<sup>104</sup> In the ten month leading up to the October 1873 referendum, anti-annexation sentiment inexorably melted in the face of a steadily mounting town debt.

The Warren faction's control of Brighton's government

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<sup>101</sup>Boston Traveler, 14 March 1872: 2

<sup>102</sup>Boston Traveler, 14 March 1872: 2; Brighton Messenger, 16 March 1872: 2.

<sup>103</sup>Brighton Messenger, 6 April 1872, 2; Boston Globe, 26 March 1872, 1.

<sup>104</sup>Brighton Town Records, vol. 4: 598.

did not go unchallenged in these months, however. Attacks came from both the Republicans and the Irish. The most serious challenge occurred on February 27, 1873 at a special town meeting called to consider a Warren faction request that the town loan the Butcher's Slaughtering & Melting Association \$250,000. The resolution read,

Whereas the State Board of Health require the Butchers' Slaughtering and Melting Association to expend for the accomodation of the business of the town a much larger sum than the amount of their capital stock.

And whereas it is for the interest of the town that the enterprise for which that corporation is chartered, should succeed.

Therefore Voted: That the town will loan its credit to said corporation for the purpose of enabling it to raise money to complete its buildings and pay its liabilities already incurred to an amount not exceeding two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in such form as the legislature may authorize, provided said corporation will furnish to the town by a first mortgage of its property, adequate security for said loan of credit; and that the town hereby requests of the Legislature the passage of a proper act to authorize said loan of credit, and containing suitable provisions for securing the town against all loss in so doing.

The February 1873 special town meeting was attended by more than three hundred residents. The loan proposal appeared to command broad support. The petition requesting the meeting had come from twenty residents, representing all of Brighton's major interest groups. William Wirt Warren and George Wilson had signed it for the Warren faction; Life Baldwin and John Warren Hollis signed for the Baldwin faction; several leading commuters (Isaac Pratt, Jr. and Henry Claflin, among others) affixed their signatures; even Father Patrick J. Rogers of St. Columbkille's Church signed, appending the notation

"Catholic priest."<sup>105</sup> Despite Father Rogers' endorsement, it was an Irishman who led the opposition, and it was almost certainly Irish votes that tipped the scales against the loan.

The defeat of the loan proposal by a vote of 164 to 174 marked the first time the Warren faction had failed to win a battle in the local political arena since its assumption of power in 1870. While no detailed account of the proceedings exists, the Messenger identified the principal opponent of the loan proposal as Michael Norton, an Irish Catholic lawyer.<sup>106</sup>

Michael Norton emerged as a major force in Brighton politics in 1873. He had emigrated to the United States as a small child about 1840, moved to Brighton about 1850 with an older brother, a laborer by occupation, attended Brighton High School, and in 1859 became Brighton's first Irishman to graduate from Harvard College. While the Nortons were somewhat better off than the typical Irish family of the period, they were far from prosperous when they arrived in Brighton. The obstacles the Irish faced in the 1850s were formidable and progress must have been slow and difficult. The first house they owned had an assessed valuation of less than \$500. As one of only a handful of Irish students who attended Brighton High School in the 1850s, Micheal Norton was almost certainly an object of verbal abuse and social ostracism, which cannot but have influenced his attitude toward the dominant Yankees. Despite these hardships, however, the Nortons made significant economic and professional progress. By the time older brother John died in the late 1860s he owned local property worth

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<sup>105</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 24, 22 February 1873.

<sup>106</sup> Brighton Town Records, vol. 4: 600-601; Brighton Messenger, 1 March 1872: 2.

\$10,000. Clearly the family attached great importance to higher education. Not only did Michael graduate from Brighton High School, Harvard College, and Harvard Law School, but his younger sister, Abby, also a Brighton High School graduate, held a position in the Brighton schools, the only Irish teacher in the system in 1870. By 1873, when he led the fight against the abattoir loan, Michael Norton was practicing law in Boston. Later he attained further distinctions, serving as Judge of the Brighton District Court, as a member of the Boston School Committee, and as Assistant District Attorney of Suffolk County, before his untimely death in 1879 at the age of 45.<sup>107</sup>

The February 23, 1873 Special Town Meeting marked Norton's first appearance on the local political scene, for he had just returned from several years residence in Pennsylvania. Brighton's Irish community felt much pride in this Harvard educated lawyer. According to the Boston Pilot, the city's Catholic paper, they "idolized" him, "compell[ing] him to accept such honors as were within their gift."<sup>108</sup>

A few weeks after the rejection of the loan proposal, Norton administered a second stunning blow to the Warren faction by defeating William Wirt's younger brother, Webster F. Warren, for the posts both of Brighton Town Clerk and Town Treasurer. The Clerkship had been in the Warren family for almost three quarters of a century. Webster had inherited it from his brother in 1866, and had

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<sup>107</sup> Boston Traveler, 14 March 1879: 4; Massachusetts, Census of 1855, Brighton; U. S. Census, 1870, Population Schedule, Brighton; Brighton, Annual Report of the Receipts and Expenditures for 1853-54 (Cambridge, 1854) 29; Brighton, Official Reports for 1868-69, 53; Brighton, Official Reports for 1870-71, 11.

<sup>108</sup> The Pilot, 22 March 1879: 3.

won reelection without serious opposition in seven consecutive town elections. The latter post had come to him in 1869, following the retirement of long-time Treasurer Henry Heath Larnard.<sup>109</sup>

That an Irishman, several years absent from Brighton, with no previous record of officeholding in the town, should sweep a member of the influential Warren family from two key offices was nothing short of revolutionary. Norton's margin of victory in these contests, moreover, was a healthy 347 to 298 for the Clerkship and 346 to 298 for Town Treasurer. It is unlikely that he could have won these victories without the support of at least some of the town's Republican voters, for the Irish then comprised less than 30 percent of Brighton's electors. The consistency of these totals is also noteworthy, being a hallmark of factional politics. Unfortunately, no detailed description of the meeting appeared in the local or Boston papers.<sup>110</sup>

The Irish had been receiving a substantial share of town jobs for some time. On August 5, 1872, Selectmen Ricker and Moley had appointed Irishman Michael Coyle, Jr., a 35 year old butcher to the post of town Labor Agent.

You are hereby authorized and directed to employ all men needed for work on the highways of Brighton [Coyle's commission read] and to discharge such men as in your judgment should be discharged; it being our intention to have the whole subject of employing and discharging men under your special charge.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Winship, I: 190.

<sup>110</sup> Brighton, Town Records, vol 4: 606; Brighton Messenger, 22 March 1873: 2.

<sup>111</sup> U. S. Census, 1870, Population Schedule, Brighton; Brighton Town Records, 5 August 1873.

However, the Irish were apparently dissatisfied with their portion. An 1872 petition, signed by fifteen Irish teamsters, reflected their dissatisfaction. "In consideration of the low wages now paid us for the labor of ourselves and our teams," their petition requested "an increase of pay believing as we do that the present prices are not sufficient recompense for the work performed."<sup>112</sup> Recognizing that Irish support was essential to its retention of power, the Warren faction was obliged to concede a bigger share of jobs and contracts to the town's Irish residents.

When Brighton town meeting convened on March 20, 1873 to elect the Board of Selectmen and other town officers, 777 voters were in attendance, the highest level of participation at a town meeting in the town's history. Republicans Henry Baldwin and Granville Fuller opposed Selectmen Jordan and Ricker's reelection. The Messenger labeled the Baldwin-Fuller ticket a "Reform Slate," but without specifying what they were endeavoring to reform. The other incumbent selectman, Irishman Patrick Moley, ran unopposed, receiving 754 votes, or 97 percent of the available ballots. The Irish, who held the political balance of power, in the end joined forces with the Warren faction, which enabled the other two incumbents to win reelection by a comfortable margin of 459 to 318 votes. Another indication of the growing influence of the Irish was Michael Norton's election to still a third post, that of Assessor.<sup>113</sup> A new and stronger alliance was thus forged in the spring of 1873 between the Warren faction, with

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<sup>112</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 23, n.d 1872.

<sup>113</sup> Brighton Town Records, Box 24, 14 March 1873; Brighton Town Records: Box 24, 20 March 1873; Brighton Messenger, 22 March 1873: 2.

its suburban vision, and the Irish electorate under the leadership of Michael Norton, an alliance that persisted until the final goal of the Warren program was attained---Brighton's annexation by Boston.

The amount of money the town dispensed to persons of Irish background increased substantially in the final year of its independence. Some \$40,000 in direct payments were made to Irishmen. Irish contractors like Patrick Green, Patrick Grace, and John Sullivan received contracts to build foundations and walls and to haul away debris from construction sites; the town purchased sand, ashes and other material from Irishmen; and it added sons of Erin to its payroll as truant officers, policemen, and janitors. Even more significant, however, were the employment opportunities provided by the many public construction projects of the period. In 1873-74 the town disbursed \$99,952.54 in labor vouchers for work on a wide range of construction projects. Since the Irish made up the great majority of Brighton's laborers, they received the bulk of these payments.<sup>114</sup>

Other factors facilitated the formation of this alliance. Warren and his associates were Democrats. The Democrats had welcomed the Irish into their ranks and had assiduously defended their rights against nativists. Republican ranks, by contrast, contained many nativists. As Thomas L. Nichols observed in his Forty Years in America (1864), "By a kind of instinct the Irish have attached themselves almost universally to the democratic party."<sup>115</sup>

The Baldwin faction made one more effort to wrest control of Brighton's town government from Warren and his associates. This occurred in mid-August

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<sup>114</sup> Brighton, Official Reports for 1873-74, 1-34.

<sup>115</sup> Edward Walkin, Enter the Irish Americans (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1976) 152-153.

1873 at a special town meeting which Baldwin and his allies had requested to reconsider two large appropriations authorized in June: \$25,000 for the construction of a new grammar school and \$74,300 for the purchase of George Wilson's Brighton Hotel. The petition for this special meeting, dated June 20, 1873, provides the clearest indication of the composition of the forces ranged against the Warren faction in mid-1873. A total of fifty-nine residents signed the document, including sixteen of the town's largest landowners. Of the fifty-four signers whose occupations can be established, eighteen (one-third) were linked to the cattle or slaughtering industries. While it contained the signatures of several leading Republicans (Henry and Life Baldwin, John Warren Hollis, and Granville Fuller, among others) no prominent Democrat affixed his signature. In addition, most of the signers resided in Allston. Finally, only three were Irish, two of them laborers (the only laborers whose names appeared on the document).<sup>116</sup>

The Selectmen delayed complying with this request for a special meeting for two months. When it finally took place in mid-August, Warren and his allies had little difficulty defeating the proposal to rescind the June appropriations. Indeed, the Warren faction took the occasion to push through several more public works projects. "It will be seen that the people of Brighton 'took no step backward' at their meeting on Thursday, but voted additional street improvements of an important character," the Messenger noted.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Brighton Town Records: Box 24, 20 June 1873.

<sup>117</sup> Brighton Town Records, vol. 4: 634-637; Brighton Messenger, 16 August 1873: 2.

The year 1873, the last year of Brighton's independent existence, saw the expenditure of vast sums of money on roads, public facilities, and other improvement projects. The town raised only \$138,000 in taxes in 1873, while spending \$619,000. In September 1873, the Messenger reported that Brighton had "the lowest tax rate in the vicinity of Boston." In November it noted that that the town "stands first on the list in Middlesex County in 1873 for increased valuation."<sup>118</sup>

In a politically significant shift, reflecting the growing debt-driven consensus for annexation, Henry Baldwin now joined William Wirt Warren as counsel for the town to advocate annexation before the legislature. According to the Messenger's account of the testimony that the two attorneys presented to the Committee on Towns, they emphasized the advantages to Boston of annexation.

The centre of Brighton was nearer the city hall of Boston than the centres of Dorchester, Roxbury, or Brookline. Brookline could not bring Boston any serviceable water front, their frontage, mainly bluffs, seventy seven hundreds of a mile; Brighton had nearly five miles, and whatever system of drainage or avenues was proposed that would include Brookline would, necessarily, also take in Brighton. The economical relations of the two places, Boston and Brighton were of especial value.

Boston, they emphasized, would also gain control over Brighton's meat supply.

Boston ought to control the meat supply. The meat killed at Brighton was consumed by Boston, and if that place was annexed to Boston the city would have a greater guarantee of good, wholesome meat than now, if the control of the supply was in charge of the city authorities.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Brighton Messenger, 6 September 1873: 2; Brighton Messenger, 22 November 1873: 2.

<sup>119</sup> Brighton Messenger, 22 March 1873: 2; Brighton Messenger, 5 April 1873: 2.

On April 16, 1873 the Committee on Towns endorsed Brighton's annexation to the City of Boston. In recommending annexation, it noted that "the town of Brighton has more than once, at regular town meetings, voted in favor of annexation" and summarized the advantages of consolidation as follows:

The whole of Brighton is within a smaller radius from City Hall than the whole area of either Brookline or West Roxbury. The business connection of Brighton and Boston is intimate, and of great importance to both places. The investment of Boston in its reservoir and driveways in Brighton and on the border of Newton is between three and four millions of dollars. The reservoir will be the source from which, in case of annexation, both Brookline and Brighton will be supplied with water. It has a river frontage of over five miles on Charles River, and for most of that distance intervenes between Brookline and the river. The line between Brighton and Newton leaves the river nearly at the head of tide-water.

The legislature concurred with the committee's recommendation and in May adopted an act giving the voters of Brighton, Brookline, and West Roxbury the option of choosing or rejecting annexation in a referendum to be held in all three communities on October 7, 1873.

The initiative for the annexation of Brighton, it should be emphasized, had come not from Boston, but from Brighton. The city's lack of interest in the acquisition of new territory in 1873 was partly due to the vast destruction wrought by the so-called Great Boston Fire of November 6, 1872, a blaze that consumed some sixty five acres of valuable downtown property and that placed a huge financial burden on the city. Even before the Great Fire, however, Boston's leaders had been less enthusiastic about annexing Brighton than other peripheral towns. It is interesting---suggestive of the city's perspective on the issue---that in recommending Brighton's annexation, the Boston Globe emphasized not its suburban development potential, but its "very extensive river frontage which can

be made available in extending the mechanical and manufacturing interests of the city and in facilitating heavy transportation."<sup>120</sup> The supporters of annexation in Brighton had a more comprehensive goal in mind. The Messenger reported in early May that the businessmen of Brighton were waiting for annexation to give "a wonderful impetus to all business operations."<sup>121</sup> (emphasis mine) The political interests of the Warren faction would likewise be served, for Boston had a strong Democratic Party organization.

While the Warren faction succeeded in beating back the various challenges to its leadership, all was not smooth sailing for them even at the eleventh hour. In the spring of 1873 the Republicans began charging the Warren faction---the "Brighton Ring," as they labelled it---with systematically defrauding the town by selling it real estate at inflated prices. This accusation was repeated on the floor of the Boston Board of Aldermen and in the Boston newspapers after annexation.

The "Brighton Ring" charge first emerged on April 5, 1873 in an unsigned letter in the Messenger which attacked the proposal that the town purchase the old Brighton Hotel as a site for a new town hall for a substantial \$74,300.00. The writer had just received a copy of the report of the Committee established to study the issue.

We had the curiosity to look it over somewhat carefully, feeling some interest in the matter of the location of said town hall. A few things in said report are very apparent and transparent--- The land must be bought of some member of the 'ring,' or 'happy family,' even though it costs a dollar or

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<sup>120</sup> Massachusetts, Acts of 1873, Chapter 303, Legislative Packet; Brighton Messenger, 19 April 1873: 2; Boston Globe, 2 May 1873: 12.

<sup>121</sup> Brighton Messenger, 3 May 1873: 2; Brighton Messenger, 10 May 1873: 2; Brighton Messenger, 17 May 1873: 2.

dollar and a quarter per foot; while land in a better location, but belonging to outsiders, can be bought for fifty or sixty cents. This is the kind of economy practiced in this town where, we believe, most of the town business is run in the interest of the 'ring.' Will the very wise committee rise and explain how these things can be.<sup>122</sup> (emphasis in original)

On September 30, 1873, the Warren faction suffered a defeat when Brighton narrowly rejected a request from the Brighton & Newton Railroad for a \$420,000 loan. The town's unwillingness to furnish financial support for the railroad, coupled with the effects of the Panic of 1873, ultimately doomed the project. The "Brighton Ring" charges no doubt also contributed to the failure. Warren defended himself against these "innuendos" in a forceful speech, but was unable to save the loan request from rejection. The defeat of the loan proposal shows that the support the Warren faction commanded did not run deep.

The October 7, 1873 referendum on annexation was, by contrast, a triumph for Warren and his allies, with their superior organizational skills very much in evidence. According to the Boston Evening Transcript the pro-annexation forces "employed the early morning hours in using carriages to carry from their homes to the polls, and thence to the depot, such Boston merchants as were apathetic on the subject, and didn't care enough about the matter to exert themselves, and thereby lose one train and an hour from business." The referendum question read: "Shall an act of the legislature of this Commonwealth in the year eighteen hundred and seventy-three, entitled 'An Act to Unite the City of Boston and the Town of Brighton', be accepted?" By a vote of 622 to 133 Brighton answered in the affirmative. "There was, however," the Transcript reported, "no noisy excitement at the polls" and "hardly a cheer when the result

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<sup>122</sup> Brighton Messenger, 5 April 1873: 2.

was announced," suggesting that many voters had doubts about annexation--- that their support had been given only because of the town's huge debt.<sup>123</sup> The Republicans cannot have been happy at the prospect of union with Boston, a Democratic Party bastion. A shift of authority from Brighton Town Hall to Boston City Hall, where the competition for political preferment would be keener, must have caused anxiety among the Irish. Only the members of the Warren faction had reason to rejoice.

Three months later, on the first Monday in January 1874, Brighton became part of the City of Boston. The metropolis thus gained 2,370 acres of territory and \$713,000 of added debt. It was a huge amount of indebtedness for such a small town. Neighboring Newton, a community containing three times more people and seven times more territory than Brighton, carried a debt in late 1873 of only \$473,000. Brighton's 1874 per capita debt was in fact twice that of New York City, which had just passed through the period of the Tweed Ring's domination.<sup>124</sup>

Shortly after annexation a member of the Boston Board of Aldermen revived the "ring" accusation, charging that the recently acquired Brighton Hotel property would not bring half its price on the open market and demanding an investigation of the transaction, but the matter was quietly dropped. The Boston Herald noted "the city authorities argue that it looks like a needless waste of money." The Messenger alluded to the charges in January 1874, but dismissed

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<sup>123</sup> Boston Evening Transcript, 8 October 1873: 2

<sup>124</sup> Brighton Messenger, 31 August 1873: 2.

the matter as "hardly worth while...now that the change in the government of Brighton has been fully accomplished."<sup>125</sup>

The most explicit accusation of corruption against the Warren faction came in 1876, during Congressman Warren's unsuccessful campaign for a second term, when the Boston Daily Advertiser, a Republican newspaper, charged that a "ring" had existed in Brighton in the years before annexation---"a 'ring' that was in its way, as dishonest and avaricious a political association as the Tammany Ring in New York." Congressman Warren led this ring, the paper charged, which had "intentionally burdened the little town of Brighton with an enormous debt" in order to drive its people "to desire annexation for relief from its exactions."

Its method of operations was to buy on account of the town, parcels of real estate belonging to Democrats at exorbitant prices, even for the times, when the values of property were most inflated. One school house lot and an engine house lot were so bought. The last speculation of the kind was the purchase of a hotel property not wanted for any purpose.<sup>126</sup>

What the Warren faction did in Brighton in the 1870 to 1874 period was to build a political organization---a machine---which moved the community toward a new definition of itself. The strategies they employed were the same strategies professional politicians and political machines were employing in urban areas all across the nation.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Boston, Reports of Proceedings of the City Council of Boston (Boston, 1874) 463; Brighton Messenger, 10 January 1874: 2; Brighton Messenger, 24 January 1874: 2.

<sup>126</sup> Boston Daily Advertiser, 31 October 1876: 2.

<sup>127</sup> Chudacoff and Smith, 152-153.

The proponents of annexation had convinced the people of Brighton that consolidation would ensure the emergent suburb relatively inexpensive services over the long term, services which would promote property values and foster rapid development. Boston was at the height of its prestige in the early 1870s, so the argument carried considerable weight. The huge debt the Warren faction generated in the 1870 to 1873 period tipped the scales for annexation.

By the time the union of Boston and Brighton took effect in January 1874, however, the nation's economy was already slipping into a major depression. Brighton's property valuations, which had risen so dramatically in the 1870 to 1873 period, declined in 1874 by \$212,750. Boston responded by cancelling many of the appropriations the town had authorized in the last months of its independence. It reduced the size of the local police force, cut teacher's salaries by one-third, and drastically curtailed street building. This was done, moreover, in the context of higher property taxes---a rate of \$15.60 versus \$9.50 per thousand (Brighton's 1873 rate), a 63 percent increase. Boston also arranged an exchange of territory with Newton in April 1875 whereby the portion of the Chestnut Hill Reservoir that lay in Newton (the Lawrence Basin) was ceded to Boston in exchange for one hundred acres on Brighton's Washington Hill, a neighborhood that contained some of the finest residences in Brighton, property assessed at more than \$600,000. Moreover, the financial crisis persisted for several years. Boston's assessed valuations fell by almost one-quarter in the period 1873 to 1879. By 1879, the city was threatening to close Brighton High School. Thus the high expectations the Warren faction had raised while

promoting annexation, perhaps reasonable in the context of the booming real estate market of the early 1870s, proved ultimately to be largely illusory.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Brighton Messenger, 15 August 1874: 2; Brighton Messenger, 31 January 1874: 2; Brighton Messenger, 31 January 1874: 2; Brighton Messenger, 6 June 1874: 2; Brighton Messenger, 21 November 1874: 2; Brighton Messenger, 20 February 1875: 2; Brighton Messenger, 13 March 1875: 2; Brighton Messenger, 15 August 1874: 2; Ernest S. Griffith, A History of American City Government: The Conspicuous Failure, 1870-1900 (Washington: University Press of America, Inc., 1974) 14; Boston, Annual Report of the Boston School Committee for 1880 (Boston, 1880) 80-81 and 96.

## **CHAPTER SIX:**

### **ANNEXATION SPURNED**

Four peripheral towns passed judgment on annexation on October 7, 1873. Three of them, Brighton, Charlestown and West Roxbury, embraced consolidation---none more emphatically than Brighton. Only one of the four, Brookline, rejected the opportunity to join Boston, doing so, moreover, by a decisive two-to-one margin.

That Brookline rejected the chance to join Boston (she would do so several more times by 1880) should come as no surprise, for the western suburb had long since provided itself in large measure with the infrastructure and public services that the other peripheral towns were hoping to procure under Boston's auspices.

The contrast with Brighton was especially dramatic. In Brighton, as we have seen, the effort to foster residential development came late. Vast sums were spent by the town fathers in the 1870 to 1873 period on the improvements necessary for suburbanization. Brighton resorted to heavy borrowing to finance these improvements and the resulting huge debt rendered annexation not only desirable, but essential to the town's future economic health.

Wealthy Brookline, by contrast, had no need to engage in heavy borrowing. It had been investing liberally in infrastructure for years. It had established public facilities and services comparable in quality to Boston's---well-constructed roads, sidewalks, street lighting, a superb school system, handsome public buildings, and ample police and fire protection. Moreover, Brookline's

town coffers were so full it could afford future improvements without resorting to heavy taxation or heavy borrowing.

While Brighton also contained rich residents, Brookline's wealthy were more numerous, more affluent, and more socially prominent than Brighton's. The town's 1873 personal property valuation was four times Brighton's---\$10,585,900 versus 2,584,081.<sup>1</sup> In 1873, 233 Brookline ratepayers held property worth \$25,000 or more; Brighton contained only 104 of comparable wealth. In Brookline this wealthiest element headed 18.2 percent of households; Brighton's wealthy, by comparison, headed only 8.5 percent of households. Brookline's twenty-five largest taxpayers owned property worth, on average, \$329,572, while the average in Brighton was a substantially lower \$194,000.<sup>2</sup>

The wealth differential was even greater than these figures suggest, for while Brighton's wealthy tended to own both businesses and homes in the town, most of Brookline's well-to-do owned residential property only. Thus the value of the stores, ships, wharves, manufacturies, warehouses and other commercial facilities they possessed were not reflected in local tax assessments. In addition Brookline's wealthy frequently maintained a primary residence outside of the town. Eben Jordan, for example, the Boston department store owner who owned a 35-acre estate in Brookline valued in 1873 at \$109,000, held the bulk of his

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<sup>1</sup> Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1873 (Boston, 1874) 77; Brighton, Official Reports for 1872 (Boston, 1873) 153.

<sup>2</sup> Since no 1873 Brighton tax valuation list exists, the above figures were calculated using the 1872 tax valuation and adding 30 percent to reflect the overall rise in property values, as reported in the Brighton Messenger in November 1874. Brighton, Official Reports for 1872, 154-177; Brighton Messenger, 22 November 1873: 2; Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1873, 2-76.

property, both personal and real, in Boston---his department store (Jordan, Marsh & Co.) on Washington Street, a townhouse on Beacon Street overlooking the Boston Common, and various Boston-based investments and bank accounts.<sup>3</sup>

While a Brighton address conferred no particular social distinction (except, possibly, of a negative kind), a Brookline address bestowed automatic and substantial prestige. Many of Boston's great families---Cabots, Lowells, Gardners, Fishers, Lawrences, Lees, Perkinses, Amorys, Sargents, Welds, Bowditches, Crowninshields and Francises, among others---owned Brookline estates.<sup>4</sup> The western suburb thus had great appeal for the socially-conscious, an appeal that no other peripheral town could match.

This wealth differential was not confined to the upper class. Brookline's middle class was also much better off than Brighton's. While about 20 percent of the population of both towns fell into a broad intermediate range of property ownership (defined here as households possessing between \$3,000 and \$25,000 of taxable wealth), the middle range in Brookline included many prosperous Boston-based merchants and professionals, while that of Brighton was made up largely of less wealthy local businessmen, shopkeepers and farmers. While almost two-thirds of Brookline's middle class households held taxable property of

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<sup>3</sup> Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1873, 37; Brighton, Official Reports for 1872, 153-177; Boston, List of Persons, Copartnerships, and Corporations Who Were Taxed on Twenty Thousand Dollars and Upwards in the Year 1865 (Boston, 1866) 72.

<sup>4</sup> U. S. Census, 1870, Population Schedule, Brookline; Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1870 (Boston, 1871) 2-67; Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1873, 2-76.

\$8,000 or more in 1873, in Brighton only 48 percent had attained a comparable level of property ownership.<sup>5</sup>

The bottom stratum of the population provides another area of striking contrast. While both communities contained large working class populations (comprising more than 60 percent of their respective workforces), these elements were very differently constituted. The most notable difference was the existence in Brookline of a much larger domestic workforce---consisting of live-in maids, cooks, nursery girls, laundresses, coachmen, gardeners, masons, carpenters and farm laborers. The domestic element comprised 33.4 percent of the elite town's total workforce. Most of them resided in or near the residences of their employers. Female servants alone totalled 737, some 29 percent of all gainfully employed residents of Brookline. The comparable figure for Brighton was only 166 in a workforce of 2,051, a scant 8 percent.<sup>6</sup> Domestic workers also tended to be highly mobile geographically. When leaving their wealthy employers, however, many travelled no further than Brookline's Marsh neighborhood, the predominantly Irish working class district near Brookline Village.<sup>7</sup>

Over half of Brookline's working class population resided in the Marsh. That neighborhood's proximity to major roadways permitted its residents to seek alternative employment in Boston and Roxbury when local jobs proved

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<sup>5</sup> U. S. Census, 1870, Population Schedule, Brookline; Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1873, 2-76; U. S. Census, 1870, Population Schedule, Brighton; Brighton, Official Reports for 1872, 153-177.

<sup>6</sup> U. S. Census, 1870, Population Schedule, Brookline; U. S. Census, 1870, Population Schedule, Brighton.

<sup>7</sup> U. S. Census, 1870, Population Schedule, Brookline; Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1870, 2-67.

unavailable. The great majority of its residents (91 percent) were Irish, of whom two-thirds were unskilled. The most common skilled and semi-skilled occupations were masons (15), gardeners (15), coachmen (12), teamsters (7), hostlers (5) and blacksmiths (4). Fifteen percent of the Marsh's Irish households were headed by women, mostly widows. The heads of these household tended also to be middle aged, with over 65 percent in their thirties and forties. Households in the Marsh were also a good deal smaller than average (4.3 versus 5.6 members for the town as a whole) and mostly nuclear. The few non-Irish who lived in the neighborhood tended to reside on its periphery, often in boarding houses along the main thoroughfares (Harvard, Washington and Boylston Streets). In 1870 eight such boarding houses existed, accomodating a total of 142 roomers.<sup>8</sup>

The Irish who moved into the Marsh in the 1850s and 1860s did so to avail themselves of the plentiful employment opportunities that a developing residential and service-oriented economy afforded. That job opportunities were ample may be inferred from the unusually high persistence rate in the Marsh. Among taxpayers (short-term data being unavailable for non-taxpayers), persistence stood at 81 percent for the period 1870 to 1873. In a shorter span, 1870 to 1872, Brighton's Irish persistence rate stood at a much lower 73 percent. Thus Brighton was losing taxpaying residents at approximately twice the rate of Brookline (9 percent per annum in Brighton versus 4.8 percent in Brookline).<sup>9</sup> How do we explain this difference?

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<sup>8</sup> U. S. Census, 1870, Population Schedule, Brookline; Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1870 (Boston, 1871) 2-67; Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1873, 2-76.

<sup>9</sup> Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1870, 2-67; Brookline, Tax List for the

Possibly the residents of the Marsh were more security conscious and less enterprising than their Brighton counterparts. Many of them began their residence in Brookline as servants, a low prestige, low paying occupation, but one that offered relative security. While Brighton's economy provided greater opportunity for economic gain, as evidenced by the greater number of wealthy Irishmen resident in the community, it did so in a context of a higher risk of failure. Brighton's more dynamic economy tended to attract a population that was both more enterprising and more transient.

The crowded living conditions in the Marsh and the narrower scope of economic opportunity there were mitigated by certain advantages: a greater concentration of Irish households and the neighborhood's proximity to St. Mary's of the Assumption Catholic Church probably fostered a stronger sense of ethnic and religious solidarity. Also, living conditions in the Marsh were improving in the early 1870s as a result of a major street construction and drainage project. This \$6,000 project was undertaken, the 1871 town report noted, in response to a petition of "Amos A. Lawrence and many other citizens not pecuniarily interested," as well as residents of the effected neighborhood. "The necessity of some measure which should raise the dwellings upon what is called "the marsh," from the perpetual, pestiferous mud upon which they were built, had long been apparent to all thoughtful persons acquainted with that district." The town's purchase in 1871 of a portion of the old Aspinwall estate for a park at the northern edge of the Marsh added to the neighborhood's appeal.<sup>10</sup> Finally,

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Year 1873, 2-76; U. S. Census, 1870, Population Schedule, Brighton; Brighton, Official Reports for 1872, 153-177.

<sup>10</sup> Brookline, Treasurer's Report of the Receipts and Expenditures for 1871 (Boston, 1872) 53 and 76-80.

residents of the Marsh benefitted from the superior public services that Brookline's government furnished, the town's excellent public schools being the most obvious case in point.

While Brookline's working class population was large, its numerical strength did not automatically translate into political influence. This was owing chiefly to two factors: First, about half of Brookline's working class population consisted of domestic workers, most of whom were women, who had no opportunity to vote in town meetings. In addition, the dependence of so many of the town's males upon the well-to-do for employment tended to discourage political activity. An estimated ten to fifteen percent of Brookline's electorate in 1873 worked for the town's wealthiest residents on a full-time basis.<sup>11</sup>

The failure of Brookline's Irish voters (comprising over 30 percent of the electorate in 1873) to secure the election of even one of their number to a town office before 1873 evidences this powerlessness. Brighton's Irish voters, by contrast, captured several key public posts in the early 1870s (Selectmen's seats in 1871, 1872 and 1873, and the positions of Town Treasurer and Town Clerk in 1873).

While Brighton's town government was dominated by an indigenous business class, which gave free reign to the profit motive, political power in Brookline rested in the hands of its middle and upper classes who viewed

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<sup>11</sup> A total of 1665 Brookline residents were eligible to vote in 1873. The names of 147 voters (representing 9 percent of the electorate) appeared in the 1873 tax list in following fashion: "Patrick Burns with A. Lowell," indicating residence on an estate. An analysis of the 1870 census would suggest that the number was actually somewhat higher. Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1873, 2-76; U. S. Census, 1870, Population Schedule, Brookline.

Brookline not as a resource to be exploited, but as a zone of safety from the problems of an expanding urban society. An 1868 almanac declared Brookline the most desirable suburban community in New England. "For local scenery, for rich cultivated fields, beautiful gardens and greenhouse productions," the almanac proclaimed rhapsodically, "for continually increasing costliness and taste in its private and public buildings, the praises of this town resound far and wide."<sup>12</sup> The great majority of Brookline's upper and middle class residents viewed the town in these terms and feared that the surrender of political self-determination to Boston would usher in a period of overly rapid, indiscriminate development that would quickly undermine the town's elite status.

In only one respect was the elite suburb unable to furnish its citizens with services comparable to Boston's---in its public water supply. Boston's Cochituate Water Works provided the city and its neighborhoods with ample, high quality water. Brookline needed good water if it was to continue to attract upper class residents, but Boston consistently refused to share its Cochituate supply with its western neighbor. By the early 1870s the water problem was becoming critical. The annexationists maintained that only through consolidation with Boston could Brookline obtain the water it needed. The water supply issue became the centerpiece of the annexation platform.<sup>13</sup>

The annexation of Brookline by Boston was proposed several times between 1870 and 1880, with the initiative coming from those elements of the

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<sup>12</sup> The Brookline, Jamaica Plain and West Roxbury Directory for 1868 (Boston: Dudley & Greenough, 1868) 26.

<sup>13</sup> Fern L. Nesson, Great Waters: A History of the Boston Water Supply (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1983) 6-11; Curtis, 283-289.

town's population that desired quick development. Annexation sentiment existed in all of the peripheral towns in the late 1860s and 1870s, though ultimately only Dorchester, Roxbury, Charlestown, West Roxbury and Brighton succumbed. To each of the five separate consolidation proposals advanced between 1873 and 1880 Brookline's electorate responded in like fashion: a town meeting was called, a resolution adopted expressing the town's opposition, and a committee appointed to remonstrate with the legislature. On one occasion only did the proponents succeed in putting the proposal on the ballot. The present chapter analyzes the events leading up to that critically important October 7, 1873 decision.<sup>14</sup> The Brookline annexation movement commanded the support of about one-third of the town's voters. Who were Brookline's annexationists? What did the proponents of consolidation hope to accomplish through union with Boston?

Support for annexation came from those elements of Brookline's population that desired quicker-paced development. A number of Brookline's major landowners, disappointed at the relatively slow growth the town had been experiencing since the early 1860s, believed that union with Boston would serve to reinvigorate the local real estate market. As Ronald Karr has noted, "Frustrations in developing land helped spur some farmers into backing an annexation movement.... The core of the annexation movement consisted of frustrated landowners in the northern half of Brookline, who hoped union with

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<sup>14</sup> The rejection of annexation by the voters of Brookline in 1873 did not put the issue to rest. Several additional initiatives followed---in 1875, 1876, 1879 and 1880. At no point, however, did the annexationists succeed in persuading more than about a third of the town's electors to support consolidation. Curtis, 278-283.

Boston would speed development."<sup>15</sup> Farmers played a key role in initiating the movement. Seven farmers sat on the fifty-seven member annexation steering committee. They included some of the town's largest landowners: David S. Coolidge, Timothy Corey, Thomas Griggs, Willard Humphrey and Charles Stearns. All but one of the seven (Humphrey) owned acreage in the northern section of Brookline. These North Brookline landowners together controlled 153 acres of undeveloped land in the section of town with the greatest development potential---acreage that carried an 1873 valuation of almost \$900,000. Two of these farmers, Charles Stearns (who paid taxes on property worth \$505,000) and Thomas Griggs (whose property was worth \$411,000), were the largest pro-annexation taxpayers. The anti-annexation steering committee, by contrast, included only one farmer, Thomas J. Hyde of South Brookline.<sup>16</sup>

Though major landowners, these farmers enjoyed scant social prestige as compared to the owners of the great estates. Their residences were modest farmhouses, assessed at no more than \$3,500, while the mansions of Brookline's Brahmin element were typically assessed at between \$20,000 and \$40,000. The educational level of these farmers did not generally extend beyond the local schools. Their property holdings were almost entirely local. The Griggs, Coolidge, and Stearns families, for example, owned much land in the vicinity of present-day Coolidge Corner. The construction of Beacon Street in 1850 had encouraged the Coolidge and Griggs families to establish a general store at the

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Dale Karr, "The Transformation of Agriculture in Brookline, 1770-1885," Historical Journal of Massachusetts, XV (1987): 42.

<sup>16</sup> Boston Post, 6 October 1873: 3; Brookline Independent, 4 October 1873: 2 and 3; Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1873, 2-76.

intersection of Beacon and Harvard Streets. However, the hoped for residential development of the adjacent area did not occur, and by the early 1870s they were feeling considerable frustration.<sup>17</sup> Once powerful politically, the influence of the town's major farmers had been steadily declining since the commuter influx of the 1850s. With their locally based interests and eagerness for profit they occupied a position analogous to Brighton's indigenous business elite, but without the equivalent political influence.

The other major annexation element consisted of up-and-coming Boston businessmen, most relatively new to the community, who were much more concerned with promoting the growth of the city in which their enterprises were situated than they were in perpetuating Brookline's elite character. Their career plans hinged upon sustained metropolitan growth. They were a nouveau riche element, who resided generally outside of the elite enclaves, where old money was dominant. Social prestige was much less important to these men than the pursuit of their individual economic ambitions.

General James B. Whitney and his son, Henry M. Whitney fell into this category. Originally from Conway in western Massachusetts, the Whitneys had lived in Brookline scarcely a decade when the annexation controversy erupted. A prominent Democrat, General Whitney had served in the legislature in the early 1850s, then as Superintendent of the United States Armory at Springfield before moving to Boston to assume the post of Collector of the Port. After stepping down from the Collector's post in 1861, an account of his career notes, he became "identified with enterprises of large extent and importance, notably the

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<sup>17</sup> Carla W. Benks and Leslie S. Larkin, A Guide to North Brookline (Brookline: Brookline Historical Commission, 1982), iii.

Boston Water Power Company and the Metropolitan Steamship Company." The younger Whitney (born in 1841)---who later became a major Brookline developer--at first worked for the Bank of Redemption, and afterwards as a clerk in the naval agent's office before engaging in the shipping business in New York City. In 1866 he returned to Boston to become the local agent of the Metropolitan Shipping Company. By 1870 both were living on Pleasant Street in Brookline's Longwood district and held property assessed at \$70,000.<sup>18</sup>

George Baty Blake, a Boston banker, the wealthiest of the annexationists, was likewise far more interested in Boston than in Brookline. Born in Vermont in 1808, he moved to Boston at age thirteen and entered his brother-in-law's dry goods business. By age twenty-one he was a full partner in the concern. In 1847, however, Blake's poor health prompted him to purchase a country estate in Brookline, where he spent the warmer months of each year.

Blake did not involve himself deeply in Brookline affairs, never holding a key town office. His focus continued to be Boston. He was involved in railroads, serving as a director of the Boston & Worcester, and was always a leading advocate of the expansion of the line. The construction of the Brookline Branch Railroad, a biographical sketch notes, was "largely due to his energy and foresight." He also played a major role in securing regular visits of the Cunard Steamship line to Boston. Later he founded the banking firm of Blake Brothers & Company. During the Civil War, Governor John Andrew appointed him agent for Massachusetts in the negotiation of foreign loans. "One of the leading aims of Mr. Blake throughout his career," the same biographical sketch notes, "was to

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<sup>18</sup> Professional and Industrial History of Suffolk County, vol. 2: 635-36; Bunting, 364; Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1870, 64.

advance in every possible way the commercial interests of Boston." Annexation would serve Blake's personal interests as well as Boston's. In addition, his twenty-seven acre estate near the corner of Washington and Cypress Streets, close to Brookline Village, a property assessed at \$150,000 in 1873, had tremendous development potential.<sup>19</sup>

Robert Bishop offers another example of an up-and-coming Boston businessman who supported annexation. An Irish-Catholic immigrant, Bishop was just beginning a long climb to the status of millionaire-manufacturer. Born in 1838, he had come to Boston as a young child, and had attended the Boston Public Schools and the College of the Holy Cross before establishing the cotton waste business in which he would make his fortune. A Democrat, Bishop won election to the Boston Common Council in 1868 and 1870, shortly before moving to Linden Street in Brookline Village. Bishop had thus been a Brookline resident for only a brief period when the annexation issue began to be agitated.<sup>20</sup> Men like the Whitneys, Blake, and Bishop believed that Boston needed ample territory and a broad tax base to prosper. Their first concern was for the well-being of Boston.

Many Brookline's Democrats, a distinct minority in 1870, welcomed the prospect of political union with the state's principal Democratic stronghold. As in Brighton, the leaders of the Brookline annexation movement tended to be

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<sup>19</sup> Kingman, 884-886; Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1873, 6.

<sup>20</sup> Boston Evening Transcript, 18 January 1897: 5.

members of the Democratic Party, while the anti-annexation leaders were most often Republicans.<sup>21</sup>

However, not all annexationists were either short-term residents or Democrats. Annexationist John Wilson Candler was neither. A highly successful East India merchant and Republican, Candler had lived in Brookline since 1849. He lived on High Street, a mile or so south of Brookline Village, in a relatively undeveloped area, a buffer zone between the densely populated Irish ghetto and the elite Gardner Street section. This was a neighborhood of contrasts; an area containing much undeveloped land, which was still taking shape socially. With a fortune estimated at \$150,000 and a residence worth \$10,000, Candler was the area's wealthiest resident. At the other extreme were Irish carpenters and laborers owning homes worth a thousand dollars or less. Like the Whitneys, Blake and Butler, Republican Candler was more concerned to promote the interests of Boston than he was with the perpetuation of Brookline's elite character. He was active in both the National Board of Trade and Boston Board of Trade, serving as President of the latter organization for two years. Like Blake he also owned substantial local real estate, having recently acquired seven acres

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<sup>21</sup> A word of caution here. Party affiliation does not provide an absolutely reliable indicator of sentiment on the annexation issue. William Aspinwall, the most vociferous opponent of annexation, for example, was a Democrat, a member of that party's state committee, while John Wilson Candler, a leading annexationist, was a prominent Republican. Candler had been a trusted adviser to Republican Governor John Andrew and had been elected to the legislature as a member of that party in 1866. "Aspinwall, William," *Biographies: Pamphlet File, Brookline Room, Brookline Public Library*; Thomas C. Quinn, ed., Massachusetts of Today: A Memorial of the State (Boston, 1892) 105.

of undeveloped land on Chester Street, near the Jamaica Plain boundary, which he was doubtless eager to develop.<sup>22</sup>

The only previous in-depth study of Brookline's annexation controversy, a 1970 Brandeis University seminar paper, observed perceptively: "Simple economic, political and ethnic factors did not divide [Brookline's] leaders on [the annexation] issue. Rather,...the group divided over their career plans, their goals in life, and their values. Those who valued growth in their own lives and in society supported the urban expansion." Such men the author labeled "career mobile," contrasting them with "those who valued tranquility and stability."<sup>23</sup> The Whitneys, Blake, Bishop, Candler and many other annexationists fit into the "career mobile" category.

Another element of the population that gave strong support to annexation were local businessmen who expected to benefit from the increased trade that a rapid rate of physical development would presumably engender. Businessmen supporting annexation included two key Irishmen, James Driscoll, a contractor and teamster, and Philip Duffy, a blacksmith and carriagemaker. Both were relatively well-to-do. Driscoll held \$36,000 of taxable property in 1873, Duffy \$23,000. Both resided on the edge of the Marsh district, the former on fashionable Harrison Place, the latter on Boylston Street. Both also owned much property in or near the Irish ghetto. Driscoll was one of the town's principal

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<sup>22</sup> Quinn, Massachusetts of Today, 105; U. S. Census, 1870, Population Schedule, Brookline; Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1873, 11.

<sup>23</sup> Edward F. Kopf, "A Struggle for Stability: The Reaction of Brookline, Massachusetts to Urban Growth," unpublished seminar paper, Brandeis University, 1970, 45.

employers of Irish workers. In the 1870 to 1874 period his firm received over \$61,000 in contracts from the town for street, sewer, and sidewalk construction.<sup>24</sup>

Other pro-annexation local businessmen included grocers James M. Seamans and William D. Coolidge. Seamans owned the largest grocery store in town, located in Brookline Village. Coolidge's establishment was situated at the intersection of Beacon and Harvard Streets, in the developing Coolidge Corner neighborhood. Others included Richard Briggs, a Brookline Village crockery merchant, George Griggs, a local attorney, and Charles Stearns, a nurseryman and florist. Coolidge, Griggs and Stearns, it should be noted, were also members of major landowning families.<sup>25</sup>

Not all of Brookline's local businessmen supported annexation, however. A number sat on the anti-annexation steering committee. These included Brahmin physician Robert Amory, Eben Morse, owner of a Brookline Village livery stable, three members of the Kenrick family, who ran a Brookline Village stove and furnace business, and Irish contractor Cornelius O'Hearne, who held over \$17,000 in property, including eight working class houses and a stable on Emerald Street at the heart of the Irish ghetto.<sup>26</sup>

Opposition to annexation came chiefly from two elements: the owners of the great estates and a solid majority of the town's commuters (the "middle-class

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<sup>24</sup> Boston Post, 6 October 1873: 3; Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1873, 21-22; Brookline, Treasurer's Report of the Receipts and Expenditures of the Town of Brookline, 1870-1874.

<sup>25</sup> Boston Post, 6 October 1873: 3; Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1873, 2-76.

<sup>26</sup> Brookline Independent, 4 October 1873: 2; Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1873, 2-76.

suburbanite political establishment," as Karr labeled them).<sup>27</sup> The anti-annexation ranks actually contained two compatible strains---ruralists and suburbanites.

The owners of the estates had a ruralist outlook. Nathaniel B. Chapin, a prosperous Boston merchant and resident of Walnut Street, reflected this point of view in his gloomy prediction of what would follow in the wake of annexation: "The beauty of the town would be destroyed by land speculators who would cut down the hills, remove the groves, and lay out streets everywhere like gridirons across the territory."<sup>28</sup>

The other major opposing group, the mass of middle and upper middle class commuters, while desiring the expansion of town services, also wished to avoid haphazard development. Through their now nearly twenty year domination of town meetings and of the town's various elective offices this element had held Brookline to a slower-paced growth rate which greatly frustrated the town's farmers and land speculators.

While leaders of both sides were men of property and standing, the preponderance of the town's rich men and almost all of its Brahmin residents who expressed a viewpoint opposed annexation. The richest residents, many of them retired merchants, well-settled in their Gardner Hill and Longwood elite enclaves, were satisfied with the status-quo and found the annexation argument, with its emphasis on rapid growth, unconvincing. Not all members of the town's social elite injected themselves into the annexation controversy (thus maintaining an

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<sup>27</sup> Karr, "The Transformation of an Elite Suburb," 226.

<sup>28</sup>Brookline Independent, 22 March 1873: 2.

aloofness from town affairs that had become traditional), but enough of them joined the ranks of the anti-annexation movement to make the Brahmin viewpoint abundantly clear. Anti-annexationists of Brahmin stripe included such prominent figures as John L. Gardner, Ignatius Sargent, James Amory, Elijah C. Emerson, Mortimer C. Ferris, Amos A. Lawrence, Augustus Lowell, and John G. Sturtevant---all Boston-based merchants and manufacturers who owned Brookline property worth \$100,000 or more. By contrast, of the eight annexationists who paid taxes of \$100,000 or more, four were farmers, another owned a 30 acre gravel bank on Harvard Avenue worth \$180,000, and the other three, all Boston-based merchants and bankers, owned substantial property in the northern part of town. None were of the Brahmin class. Also, the annexationists were less wealthy, on average, than their opponents. A comparative analysis of the leaders of the two movements indicates that the average property valuation of the annexationists with estates worth more than \$25,000 was \$95,000 as compared to \$166,000 for the anti-annexationists.<sup>29</sup>

Indicative of Brookline's measured, class-conscious approach to development in the years leading up to the annexation vote was its April 1871 purchase of two pieces of land, a four acre parcel adjacent to the Irish ghetto and a five acre parcel on Cypress Street near Brookline Village, for the creation of public parks. The committee charged with these purchases was headed by Amos A. Lawrence, who also, it will be recalled, spearheaded the movement to

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<sup>29</sup> These calculations were made by cross-referencing lists of leaders on both sides of the annexation question, which appeared in the Boston and Brookline papers, with the 1873 Brookline tax list. Brookline Independent, 4 October 1873: 2; Boston Post, 6 October 1873: 3; Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1873, 2-76.

improve conditions in the Marsh. The cost of these purchases was a substantial \$79,000.

The owner of the land that adjoined the Irish ghetto, William Aspinwall, had developed the northerly portion of the old Aspinwall estate into an upper class neighborhood. The land he offered the town in 1871 had long served as a buffer between these streets and the ghetto. In selling the land to the town, Aspinwall noted that he "had not been anxious to sell [it], and would not have consented...without the restrictions inserted in the deed, as he had held the land out of the market for many years, rather than sell it to be used for a class of buildings that would necessarily depreciate the value of his own adjoining property, as well as that of Linden Place, Harrison Place, etc." Similar concerns were expressed by the owners of the Cypress Street property who insisted that the deed preclude future development of the parcel.<sup>30</sup>

Let us now turn to the struggle over annexation itself. The first major piece of annexation legislation affecting Brookline was the Six Mile Bill that was filed in February 1870. This measure provided for the absorption by Boston of all the territory south of the Charles River within a six mile radius of Boston City Hall.<sup>31</sup>

The 1870 annual town meeting adopted a resolution expressing vigorous opposition to the proposal and directing the Board of Selectmen to testify against the measure before the legislature's Committee on Towns. The initiative for annexation in 1870, it should be emphasized, originated entirely outside of Brookline. "Notwithstanding the effort of missionaries from neighboring towns,"

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<sup>30</sup> Brookline, Report of the Selectmen for 1871-72 (Boston, 1872) 76-80.

<sup>31</sup> Curtis, 279.

declared attorney George Homer, former State Representative and the chief spokesman for the 1870 anti-annexationists, "the proposition for annexation of Brookline to Boston was voted down [in town meeting] by a majority so great that the minority could hardly be seen."<sup>32</sup>

No Brookline resident spoke in favor of this bill at the legislative hearings held in the spring of 1870. The main Brookline spokesman, Homer, dismissed as ridiculous the suggestion that Brookline was any less capable of providing first-rate services than Boston. He pointed to the town's accomplishments---its fine schools, which he described as the best in the state; its well-equipped library, which had cost \$50,000, and which contained 12,000 volumes; its new town hall, worth \$100,000; the steps it had taken to furnish a regular system of sewers; and its sizeable appropriations for police protection (made necessary, he charged, not by residents of Brookline, but by "the roughs [of Boston and Brighton] who pass to and fro over her territory.") As to the water supply problem, Brookline would soon have that solved, he insisted, a company having already been chartered to provide water, which would begin doing so just "as soon as a sufficient number of takers are found to make it pay." In short, Homer concluded, "Brookline was up to the times," and should be left alone.<sup>33</sup> Other Brookline residents who testified included Thomas Parsons, the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, and Benjamin F. Baker, long-time Town Clerk. To the relief of the anti-annexationists, the Six Mile Bill failed to pass. This defeat marked only a

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<sup>32</sup> Boston Traveler, 14 April 1870: 1.

<sup>33</sup> Boston Evening Traveler, 14 April 1870: 1.

temporary setback, however, for a new and stronger annexation initiative followed in late 1871.

This second initiative was launched on December 9, 1871 when a letter, written by Brighton's George A. Wilson and others, appeared in the the Brookline Transcript: "Notice is hereby given," it read, "that it is our intention to apply to the next General Court for such legislation as may be needed to annex the Town of Brighton and the territory lying between said Town and the City of Boston to said City of Boston."<sup>34</sup>

The second effort, in contrast to the first, enjoyed the support of six prominent Brookline residents, who petitioned the legislature in favor of annexation. Five of the six signers, it should be noted, were major landowners: Willard Humphrey, Charles Stearns, David S. Coolidge, and William J. Griggs, all farmers, and John Gibbs, owner of valuable land on Harvard Street. The sixth signer was Brookline Village grocery store proprietor James M. Seamans.<sup>35</sup>

Five days after the appearance of the Wilson letter, on December 14, 1871, Brookline's annexationists gathered in town hall for their first public meeting. The main speakers of the evening were Elias Haskett Derby of Boston, a prominent lawyer and railroad executive, and General James Whitney.

Annexation to Boston, Derby declared, would liberate the forces of development in Brookline. Boston, "with its long purse," would find solutions to the two most vexing problems facing the town---procuring an ample water supply

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<sup>34</sup> Brookline Transcript, 9 December 1871: 2.

<sup>35</sup> Brookline Independent, 27 September 1873: 1; Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1870, 27, 25 and 54.

and constructing an adequate drainage system. Once these problems were properly addressed, he predicted, "a large population would be thrown from Boston into Brookline.... It depended much upon the action of Brookline whether the population of Boston came that way or some other."

If Brookline wants to be the court end of Boston, and have the price of her land increased, she must have a plan of streets, grade etc., to which all future building should conform.... If Brookline would have a park within her limits, and the rudiments of a park are in there, it must have the streets and avenues leading to Boston, laid out in a scientific manner. To accomplish this the two places must become one.<sup>36</sup>

Derby also claimed that annexation would mean lower taxes for Brookline. The debt of Brookline was already 45 percent higher than that of Boston when calculated on a per capita basis, he pointed out.<sup>37</sup>

At this point Selectman William Aspinwall, the owner of considerable property in the northern section of Brookline, but an advocate of measured development, interrupted the proceedings to take heated issue with Derby and Whitney.<sup>38</sup> He described Brookline as much sounder financially than Boston, and

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<sup>36</sup> Brookline had already evidenced its interest in parks, as previously noted, by establishing two large playgrounds on the fringes of Brookline Village. Desmond Fitzgerald, Brookline Playgrounds (Brookline, 1907) 1-7.

<sup>37</sup> What Derby failed to mention, however, was the much higher per capita valuation in Brookline. While Brookline's 1872 debt stood at a sizeable \$473,800, its total valuation was a very high \$29,413,914, and its tax rate a relatively low \$8.70 per thousand. Kingman, 841.

<sup>38</sup> Aspinwall had an unusual background. Born in London, England in 1819, he was the only son of Colonel Thomas Aspinwall, originally of Brookline, United States Consul in London from 1815 to 1853. In 1833 William Aspinwall left England for Cambridge, Massachusetts, attended Harvard College (1838) and the Dane law school, earning an LL. B., and opened a law office in Boston. In 1847, he moved his residence to Brookline where he quickly became a major

characterized Derby's arguments as "shadowy." He also questioned the honesty of both men, alleging that their business practices, as former President of the Metropolitan Railroad and President of the Boston Water Power Company, respectively, were not above reproach. General Whitney responded to these charges with what the press decribed as "a few sharp remarks."<sup>39</sup>

When the town met in January to vote on the annexation issue, its supporters, recognizing that they were a minority, sought to delay consideration. The chief proponents at these two meetings, held on January 3 and January 25, 1872, were General Whitney, George Griggs, John W. Candler, and Willard A. Humphrey. Humphrey had experienced difficulty persuading the town to make improvements in the roads near his South Brookline property. "It took me three years to get one street laid out" (accepted as a town way), he later complained to the Brookline Transcript.<sup>40</sup>

Both sides were naturally concerned to enlist the support of Brookline's Irish voters, who made up about one-third of the town's electorate. In an obvious bid for their support, General Whitney noted that Boston was "a paradise for a

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force in town politics, serving as Town Clerk (1850 and 1851), State Representative (1851 and 1852), Delegate to the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention (1853), State Senator (1854), Trial Justice (1857 to 1860), Trustee of the Public Library (1858-1875), Assessor (1870), and Selectman (1871-72). Kingman, 894; "Aspinwall, William," Biographies: Pamphlet File, Brookline Room, Brookline Public Library.

<sup>39</sup> Brookline Transcript, 16 December 1871: 2.

<sup>40</sup> Brookline Transcript, 15 March 1873: 2; In 1850 Griggs had been the key figure behind the building of Beacon Street. However, the construction of that road had failed to generate development in the southern section of the town where he owned over seventy acres. He hoped that annexation would serve to foster rapid growth there. Karr, "The Evolution of an Elite Suburb," 42 and 246.

poor man, and there was no place where the class was better provided for.... If the people of Brookline were annexed to Boston they could enjoy all the public institutions" of a great city. To this John McCormack, a Brookline Village lumber dealer, took strong exception, declaring that he resented "the allusions made in reference to the Irish people" and that "they wanted no charity; that they had strong arms, strong constitutions and pure hearts, and could support themselves."

It is not clear that either party to the annexation struggle received the preponderance of Irish support, for Irishmen were to be found on both sides of the question. Mention has been made of contractor James Driscoll's support of annexation and contractor Cornelius O'Hearne's opposition. While consolidation might have served to increase job opportunities or to have enhanced political opportunities for Brookline's Irish, their dependence on the owners of the great estates and on town government for employment served to discourage support. Lumber dealer McCormack's opposition to annexation, for example, was no doubt more influenced by his business relationship with the town, as a provider of lumber and gravel, than by offended ethnic pride. In 1873, McCormack did more than \$6,000 of business with the town. The opportunities town government offered the Irish for profit and employment were substantial. While the town's rate of physical expansion had slowed since the early 1860s, governmental expenditures continued to rise dramatically. The level of spending in the four year period 1870 to 1873 had virtually doubled, rising from \$320,000 to \$591,000. Brookline's spending in these years just preceding the annexation referendum actually exceeded Brighton's (despite the latter's heavy borrowing) by some 18 percent.

The main opposition spokesmen at the January 1872 town meeting were Aspinwall, George N. Carnes, owner of a Boston clothing store, and William A. Wellman, a Boston bank president. The issue was brought to a head when Wellman introduced a motion, similar to the one the town had adopted in 1870, directing its Selectmen to appear before the legislature to voice the town's opposition to annexation and also authorizing the hiring of legal counsel to fight the measure.

Willard Humphrey countered by urging the town to send representatives of both sides, contending that it would be wrong to tax those who favored annexation "for the purpose of employing counsel to oppose the project." Candler then offered an amendment embodying this novel proposal.

Thunderous applause greeted William Aspinwall as he rose to respond to Candler's motion.

This is a dodge [he declared]. These gentlemen have already put the town to a great expense and have done everything they could to get a majority of the voters of the town to petition in favor of annexation and now that they have ignominiously failed they come and ask us deliberately to join them in a petition to bring about the same thing. Was there ever anything so transparently absurd?.... If we submit to them we shall be just what Mr. Derby, the other day, told us we were---a set of cabbage and asparagus planters, who wanted intelligent men from Boston, merchants and members of the Board of Trade, to come here and manage our business for us. Sir, the Town of Brookline has been able to manage her affairs for 168 years, and can manage them a little longer without the assistance of these gentlemen.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Brookline Transcript, 27 January 1872: 2.

The town then proceeded to adopt William Wellman's anti-annexation resolution by a lopsided vote of 243 to 82.<sup>42</sup>

Brookline had made its decision, but the legislature had yet to vote on the Wilson bill, and as long as that measure was under active consideration the annexation debate continued raging in the local press. On January 27 1872 the Transcript published a letter signed "Annexationist," expressing the main arguments for union with Boston---that it would lead to improvements in Brookline's infrastructure, especially its water supply, which would foster rapid development. The proponents also characterized annexation as "inevitable."

As Boston continues her marvelous growth we must grow too, not apart from her, but as part of her. Broad avenues, well-graded, lighted and drained must supplant narrow country roads; and pure water, and inexhaustable at that, must flow to every home, instead of the "clear and sparkling" contents of little "Willow Pond" with the gratuitous contribution from Hart's Content, and the other dwellings that drain into it. Annexation is not probable, simply; it is inevitable, and is gaining strength every day.<sup>43</sup> (emphasis in original)

On February 10 a rejoinder, signed "A. A." (presumably Anti-annexationist), appeared stating what was perhaps the main opposition argument---that Brookline could not possibly be better off as part of Boston inasmuch as she would then have to compete with other suburbs for the benefits she was already capable of providing for herself by virtue of her ample tax base.

And now as to the "Annexationist's" remarks on the "marvelous growth" of Boston, broad avenues, etc., let him understand that so soon as it is proved

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<sup>42</sup> Brookline Independent, 27 September 1873: 1.

<sup>43</sup> Brookline Transcript, 27 January 1872: 2.

that Boston needs Brookline, that Brookline is degenerating from want of these avenues to be built, somewhere in the distant future, that the supposed difficulty in her drainage are not imaginary, that it is impossible for her to obtain water cheaper, better, and in greater quantity than by tapping Cochituate, and that her financial condition is to be strengthened by throwing her money into a pool and running her luck with sixteen others instead of remaining where she is where the chances of success are certain, so soon as these things are proved, then it may begin to dawn upon us that annexation "is inevitable" and not until then.<sup>44</sup> (emphasis in original)

Five legislative hearings were held on the annexation question in the period February 28 to March 14, 1872. Opponents spared no effort to defeat the measure at its source. A panel of five attorneys represented Brookline in these proceedings: George F. Homer, Theodore Sweetser, Charles H. Drew, Moses B. Williams, Jr. and Alfred D. Chandler. All but Sweetser were Brookline residents. Norfolk County, which stood to lose Brookline if it were annexed, sent two attorneys of its own to oppose the measure: Charles I. Reed, a former Massachusetts Attorney General and State Superior Court Justice, and Asa A. French, the County's District Attorney. The petitioners were represented by attorneys George Shattuck, George Griggs, and Clement K. Fay. Griggs and Fay were Brookline residents. Boston sent attorneys as well, but they merely observed.<sup>45</sup>

According to the Brookline Transcript, in early 1872 opponents of annexation not only outnumbered proponents but owned four times more Brookline property. According to the March 23, 1872 Transcript, 154 Brookline residents (only ninety-six of whom were taxpayers), owning property worth \$2.6

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<sup>44</sup> Brookline Transcript, 10 February 1872: 2.

<sup>45</sup> Brookline Independent, 27 September 1873: 1.

million, had signed petitions supporting annexation, while 400 residents, with property valued at \$10.5 million, had affixed their names to petitions opposing it. Since the petitions in question no longer exist, we cannot corroborate these figures, but they seem consistent with other evidence.<sup>46</sup>

The principal witnesses for annexation at the 1872 hearings were Samuel C. Cobb, Henry L. Pierce, and Nathan Carruth of Boston, all prominent figures (Carruth was a former President of the Old Colony Railroad, while Pierce and Cobb both later served as Mayor of Boston). Brookline residents George Griggs, Willard A. Humphrey, John W. Candler, and George Baty Blake also testified.<sup>47</sup>

The main arguments advanced by the annexationists at these hearings were the following: (1) Brookline needed an ample supply of clean water, which Boston alone could supply; (2) The town was doing a poor job of constructing new streets and providing adequate sewerage; and (3) Brookline's government was undemocratic, inefficient and corrupt. General Whitney, who led the attack on the town government, charged that Brookline was dominated by a small group of men with a vested interest in perpetuating the status quo:

Most

of the legislation of our town is done at town meetings, where less than two hundred of the eleven hundred voters attend....; and if there is a division a vote will be carried, by a few over one hundred, which takes your town government down to that.... They are the laborers of the town to a large extent, who work on the highways, and they are indoctrinated with the belief....that if they work for the town, they must vote as the town officers dictate, and they come in a body to the town meetings. They are a united corps of men. We cannot break in upon their phalanx. With our police force of twelve men, with our Selectmen who draw five hundred dollars

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<sup>46</sup> Brookline Transcript, 23 March 1872: 2.

<sup>47</sup> Brookline Independent, 27 September 1873: 1.

apiece---five of them---with our Assessors who draw about a thousand dollars apiece, there is a compact, organized body of men who are at our town meetings..., and they control our town.

Whitney attributed the low attendance at town meetings to the businessman's preoccupation with commercial and professional responsibilities.

Our merchants are so busy at their wharves, and in their stores, and the bankers in their banking houses, and the lawyers in their offices, and our citizens generally being in Boston they have got to come away from Boston in order to vote.... They have their notes to pay at the banks, and pressing business here [in Boston], and they are not going to meddle with these town meetings.<sup>48</sup>

Willard Humphrey contended that Brookline's anti-annexationists consisted of two elements---a "ring" made up of "the men in town holding office, and men who work on the roads, some mechanics who are pretty well in the 'ring' so that they can get the work" and those who "own a good deal of land and want to keep it for their grandchildren and live out there and pay small taxes."<sup>49</sup>

Brookline's 1873 Annual Report summarized the charges the annexationists were levelling against the town government as follows:

That the Brookline businessmen, who do business in Boston, were practically disfranchised; that it was practically impossible for them to attend town meetings.

That the appropriations in Brookline were usually voted by an irresponsible minority, who frequently appropriated hundreds of thousands of dollars, where the result of it is in many instances to vote a part of it into their own pockets.

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<sup>48</sup> Brookline Transcript, 23 March 1872: 2.

<sup>49</sup> Brookline Independent, 27 September 1873: 1.

That in Brookline, hundreds of thousands of dollars can be, and have been appropriated by seventy-five to one hundred men, many of whom did not know what they were voting for, or why they voted for it, because there was no opportunity to discuss it.

That in some instances \$200,000 was appropriated in twenty-five minutes, when there were not ten men in the town meeting who knew what they voted for.

That there was no sewerage, or, at any rate, very bad sewerage in Brookline.

That there were very few new streets laid out, and those very improperly laid out.

That Brookline needed water, which Boston alone could supply.

That the Brookline town government was a failure.<sup>50</sup>

There is no real evidence to support the allegation that Brookline was less democratic than other towns, or that its government was corrupt. The decision-making procedures that Brookline employed did not differ significantly from those employed by countless other Massachusetts communities. Its town meetings were generally held on Monday afternoons at 1 p.m., a common practice. Brighton also held midday town meetings. The town clerk was required, in Brookline as elsewhere, to give timely notice by distributing a warrant to all voters. Annual town meetings, held in March, were generally well attended. Average participation in the 1870 to 1873 period was 445, or about 30 percent of eligible voters. In 1872, a year in which 27.5 percent of Brighton's voters participated in town meetings, Brookline's rate was a slightly higher 32 percent. A total of eleven town meetings were held in Brookline in the period 1871 to

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<sup>50</sup> Brookline, Selectmen's Report for 1872-73 (Boston, 1873) 57-59.

1872. The degree of participation varied depending upon the importance and/ or controversy of the issues on the warrant. The most heavily attended were those held in November to elect state and national officials. In the 1871 to 1872 period, 51 percent of voters participated in these November meetings. In no instance does the public record indicate a participation level at any meeting of the 1871 to 1872 period of fewer than 139 voters. Moreover, the issues this least well-attended town meeting considered were relatively inconsequential. Thus while it may be true that the town meeting form of government did not lend itself to broad participation, especially as the population of a town increased, the inconveniences that discouraged broader participation were no greater in Brookline than elsewhere.<sup>51</sup>

The suggestion that Boston businessmen were effectively disenfranchised by midday town meetings is difficult to credit. A working class voter would have had greater difficulty fitting a town meeting into his schedule than a Boston businessman. Brookline Town Hall, the site of all town meetings, was only thirty minutes away from downtown Boston by train. The annexationist claim that Boston businessmen were unrepresented is contradicted, moreover, by the results of town elections. Of the eleven men chosen as selectman or assessor in the 1870 to 1873 period, nine were Boston businessmen.<sup>52</sup> In truth the business

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<sup>51</sup> Brookline, Town Records, 1858-71 (Brookline, 1892) 428 and 470; Brookline, Town Records, 1872-1884 (Brookline, 1888) 12 and 82; Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1870, 63; Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1871 (Boston, 1872) 68; Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1872, 75; Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1873, 77.

<sup>52</sup> Brookline, Town Records, 1858-1871, 429 and 469; Brookline, Town Records, 1872-1884, 12 and 82-82.

element dominated Brookline's town government. It had dominated it more or less continuously since the early 1850s.

What are we to make of the charges of corruption? That Brookline's leaders rewarded their political allies and denied employment and contracts to their political foes was to be expected. That they received the support of those whom they favored with jobs is hardly surprising. As to the more serious charge that some of them pocketed town money, the annexationists offered not one shred of corroborating evidence, nor is there anything in the public record to support the charge. The preponderance of evidence, in fact, suggests that the Brookline of the early 1870s was an exceptionally well-governed town.

The annexationists wanted the legislative committee to believe that Brookline was under the control of a set of greedy men of very limited vision, who through undemocratic, unfair, and corrupt practices, were depriving the town's middle and upper class residents of the influence to which their numbers and their superior wisdom presumably entitled them. This characterization bore scant resemblance to the reality of Brookline---a commuter-dominated upper class suburb determined to protect itself from the indiscriminate development that a loss of self-determination would almost certainly entail. Moreover such charges of corruption ought not to be taken at face value. They were commonplace in the decade of the 1870s, a period which offered huge new opportunities for profit from government intervention at all levels---national, state and local.

The legislative committee declined to recommend the annexation of either Brookline or Brighton in the 1872 session. The Brookline Transcript noted on

March 23, 1872, "a decided majority of both houses of the Legislature is opposed to any present enlargement of Boston."<sup>53</sup>

It was in the 1873 legislative session that the movement for the annexation of Boston's suburbs reached its high water mark, leading to the absorption by Boston, in early 1874, of three additional towns. The annexation movement also reached a high water mark in Brookline in 1873.

"The question of annexation is one that is now being thoroughly agitated," the Transcript reported in late 1872. "Petitions are being circulated among those in favor of the same and are numerous signed. A candidate has been nominated for the Legislature for the special purpose of advocating the measure in the coming season." The candidate, John Wilson Candler, chosen by a pro-annexation caucus, was destined to suffer defeat by an even greater margin than the cause he espoused.<sup>54</sup>

The annexationists' contention that Brookline should join Boston to avail itself of the city's "long purse," as Elias Derby had put it, was considerably weakened by a major physical disaster---the Great Boston Fire of November 9 and 10, 1872, a conflagration which destroyed sixty-five acres at the commercial center of the city, property with an estimated value of \$75 million. Many

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<sup>53</sup> Brookline Transcript, 23 March 1872: 2.

<sup>54</sup> Candler's candidacy failed along with annexation, Brookline instead electing Moses B. Williams, Boston merchant and anti-annexationist, by a vote of 440 to 168. Brookline, Town Records, 1872-1884, 204-206; Brookline Transcript, 2 November 1872: 2; John C. Rand, ed., One of a Thousand: Biographical Sketches of One Thousand Representative Men Residing in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (Boston, 1890) 100.

Brookline residents sustained losses. The Brookline Transcript reported of this disaster,

The losses have fallen heavily upon the citizens of Brookline and immediate vicinity and the number of those who have lost their stocks of goods can be numbered by dozens and while there are many who are direct losers, the effect of these losers will be felt by the entire community.... On one street in this town nearly every person was thrown out of a place of business and lost largely.<sup>55</sup>

The Great Fire weakened the annexation movement by damaging the city's reputation for efficiency. The annexationists had long touted Boston's superior public services as a main rationale for annexation---particularly its modern police and fire departments and its waterworks. Boston's failure to contain the Great Fire, and the subsequent debate over the causes of this unprecedented disaster, seriously undermined that reputation. The Great Fire also served to deplete the financial resources which Derby and others had suggested would enable Boston to solve Brookline's water and drainage problems.

Annexation's appeal was weakened as well by a worsening general economic situation---the beginnings of the severe Depression of 1873. While the major effects of this economic downturn were to come after the annexation referendum of October 1873, the city's business community was already feeling anxious about the deteriorating financial climate. On September 22 the Boston Journal noted that conditions in New York "were sufficiently blue...to satisfy the most inveterate prophet of disaster and ruin." The following day the same newspaper added, "The business relations of the two cities are so closely

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<sup>55</sup> Brookline Transcript, 11 November 1872: 2.

connected that any great disturbance of financial affairs like that witnessed in the metropolis over the past few days could not pass without exciting the most intense interest among all classes of businessmen in the city."<sup>56</sup>

These factors prompted the city to adopt a fiscal policy of retrenchment, leading to a diminished interest in acquiring new territory. While annexation offered Boston distinct advantages---enhanced prestige (other major cities like Philadelphia and New York were much larger territorially), increased political influence, a broader tax base, and the opportunity to introduce a uniform system of streets and sewers and a comprehensive water system, which would serve to stimulate real estate development---it also threatened to impose heavy short-term financial burdens which the metropolis was ill-equipped to meet. The new neighborhoods would expect Boston to make immediate and substantial investments in their infrastructure and public services. While many of Boston's leaders continued to express enthusiasm for annexation, the Mayor and several other key leaders began having second thoughts.

The Mayor of Boston in 1873 was Republican Henry Lillie Pierce, a Boston businessman, former State Representative, and Dorchester resident who had been elected an Alderman in 1869, Dorchester's first representative to that body. Pierce had assumed the mayoralty in early December 1872, only a month after the Great Fire, defeating Democrat William Gaston, whose administration had been discredited by the disaster. Pierce's principal goals during his brief term (he resigned in December 1873 to assume a seat in Congress) were the reconstruction of the commercial district and the reorganization of the city

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<sup>56</sup> Boston Journal, 22 September 1873: 4; Boston Journal, 23 September 1873: 1; Griffith, 13-22.

government. The addition of new territory to the city was a secondary concern to this chief executive.<sup>57</sup>

In his testimony to the legislature in March of 1873, Councillor E. S. Loring, Chairman of the Legislative Affairs Committee of the Boston City Council, another Dorchester resident, expressed opposition to the annexation of further territory. Boston's resources were already overextended, he asserted, and neither Brookline nor Boston had anything to gain from annexation.<sup>58</sup>

Also indicative of this waning interest in annexation was a recommendation made by Democratic Alderman Josiah Quincy IV during the March 1873 legislative hearings on annexation. Claiming to speak for the Mayor, Quincy recommended that the legislature put aside the annexation bill it was then considering and instead "authoriz[e] the governor to appoint a commission of three to report to the next General Court, after due investigation, on the feasibility and practicality of the plan, the commercial, economical, industrial, sanitary and other considerations relating thereto, and the mode of bringing about the union, if deemed advisable." <sup>59</sup> (emphasis mine)

The testimony given at the legislative hearing on Brookline annexation, held on March 14, 1873, evidenced much less consensus than was the case in the Brighton annexation hearing. Brighton town meeting had adopted a pro-annexation resolution and its anti-annexationists had been represented only by

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<sup>57</sup> Winsor, vol. 3 : 279 and 281-284.

<sup>58</sup> Boston Daily Advertiser, 15 March 1873: 1.

<sup>59</sup> Boston Daily Advertiser, 22 March 1873: 1.

an attorney. Brookline, by contrast, followed its usual procedure of adopting a resolution condemning annexation. It also sent its Selectmen to testify in opposition, seconded by a large body of prominent citizens. The atmosphere at the Brookline hearing was accordingly much more contentious and emotional.<sup>60</sup>

Proponents of annexation raised three main arguments in urging passage of the annexation bill: (1) The town meeting form of government was unsuited to the needs of a growing community; (2) Brookline's independent status allowed wealthy Bostonians to evade their responsibilities to the metropolis; and (3) Brookline's water and drainage problems could only be solved through union with Boston.

As to the alleged inadequacy of Brookline's town government, a succession of speakers declared this to be not only untrue, but a libel upon the people of Brookline. Alfred Kenrick, Jr., the town's chief engineer, described Brookline's government as both efficient and economical. "All classes are well-represented in town meetings," he insisted. Attorney Alfred D. Chandler, an expert on municipal law, not only defended Brookline's government as efficient and honest, but challenged the constitutionality of the annexation bill, threatening to contest it in the state courts.<sup>61</sup>

The annexationists added a new argument in 1873. George Otis Shattuck, their attorney, a corporation lawyer, former Boston Common Council

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<sup>60</sup> Boston Daily Advertiser, 15 March 1873: 1.

<sup>61</sup> Boston Daily Advertiser, 15 March 1873: 1; A History of Brookline, Massachusetts, 1630-1906, Commemorating the Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Town (Brookline, 1906) 142.

member, and law associate of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., attacked Brookline as a bastion of privilege and characterized the town's anti-annexationists as socially consciousness tax evaders. The Boston Daily Advertiser summarized Shattuck's remarks as follows:

He spoke of the general desire for annexation, of the inequalities of taxation in the cities and towns around Boston. In Chelsea \$57 are annually expended for every voter, while in Brookline at half the rate of taxation the expenditures are \$160 to each voter. At the same rate of taxation the child born in Brookline would have six or seven times as much laid out for him. He thought that this injustice should be remedied, and that it was the duty of the legislature so to lay out the boundaries as to make taxation more equal.

In urging the legislators to tear down the political barriers that permitted rich men to escape their responsibilities to the metropolis, Shattuck emphasized morality as well as justice.

Those cosy gentlemen from Brookline point to Boston as a sink of corruption, as if they had nothing to do with it. But they make all their money in Boston and then go out to Brookline to avoid taxation, when they should bear their share in paying for all the advantages they enjoy there, and also assist in keeping it pure.

Finally, he warned of the dire social consequences that would flow from continued residential segregation.

He depicted the fearful state of affairs that would exist in a few years if more poor men went to Chelsea, more rich men to Brookline, and the roughs and criminals stayed in Ward 2.... If we bring in outside communities as fast as the corrupt classes grow in the city and the houses of the wealthy give way to the march of business, the cities would be kept pure.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Boston Daily Advertiser, 15 March 1873: 1.

The anti-annexationists made no effort to answer these essentially unanswerable charges. Shattuck's argument was designed to influence the legislative committee, many of whose members represented poor constituencies. Once the annexation bill was enacted and the battle shifted to Brookline, the annexationists abandoned this line of argument, no doubt recognizing that it would have little appeal to Brookline's middle and upper class electorate.

If independent Brookline had an Achilles heel, it lay in the town's apparent inability to solve its water and drainage problems. Here was a serious failure which demonstrated, the annexationists insisted, the inability of a town meeting form of government to meet the needs of an urbanizing population. Brighton's failure to bring its unhealthy slaughtering practices under control in the 1860s had prompted the state to mandate the consolidation of the slaughtering industry. A failure to resolve the water problem might also serve to encourage state intervention, in the form of the adoption of the annexation enabling act then under consideration.

Both sides also recognized that the water and drainage issue, if left unresolved, might serve to persuade some Brookline voters to support annexation. The water supply and drainage problems thus became the pivotal issue in the local annexation debate.

The water problem was of long standing. The great majority of Brookline's households drew their water from private wells. The supply, however, was both inadequate and of questionable quality. These shortcomings were, of course, a serious impediment to development.

As Brookline historian John G. Curtis wrote of the water and drainage problems:

The main concern of the reasonably prosperous householder in the last three decades of that century was running water---water which not only ran into his house, but also out. The more metropolitan the character of a community, the less satisfactory were back-yard wells, and rural sanitation; while at the same time, the larger were the costs of obtaining an adequate water supply, laying the necessary mains and service pipes, and providing a sufficient system of sewerage disposal. Forehanded, Boston had already appropriated the nearest available surface-water resources, and when Brookline got around to action, it faced the problem of supplying a town of more than 7,000 inhabitants from a numerous group of wells.

Not only did Brookline face a supply problem, but the mains, aqueducts, and holding reservoirs that the Cochituate Water Works had previously laid through the town had disrupted the watershed system in Brookline, producing a serious drainage problem to compound its difficulties.<sup>63</sup>

Nine years earlier Amos A. Lawrence had urged the establishment of a committee to look into the possibility of purchasing the property of the Jamaica Plain Aqueduct Company, or some other supply of water for the town. While the town rejected Lawrence's suggestion, it did establish a committee to study the problem. However, this committee made scant progress.<sup>64</sup>

Brookline approached Boston several times in the early 1870s in an effort to access the city's water supply. If Boston had been willing to share its Cochituate supply that would have solved the elite suburb's problem, but Boston consistently refused, perhaps reasoning that Brookline's water difficulties was the

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<sup>63</sup> In 1865, Brookline made an agreement with the Cochituate Water Works whereby Boston was allowed to lay pipes through the town and Brookline would have the right to establish hydrants and tap the water supply for fire-fighting purposes. This arrangement furnished the town no drinking water, however. A History of Brookline, Massachusetts, 1630-1906, 283-84.

<sup>64</sup> Curtis, 237.

only card it possessed that might induce the revenue rich suburb to embrace consolidation. A January 23, 1872 report of the Committee on Water Supply noted that its first recourse had been to obtain "a supply of water by negotiation with Boston," but that, "no encouragement was met with as to obtaining water through negotiation with them; in fact they appear to have no water to spare at present, and have little disposition to assist us in obtaining it. This plan was therefore abandoned."<sup>65</sup>

The anti-annexationists were naturally eager to demonstrate that the town was making progress on the water problem in advance of the legislature's vote on the annexation bill. At the prompting of Brookline's State Representative, the legislature had recently adopted "An act to authorize the Town of Brookline to take water from the Charles River." On March 18, 1873, the anti-annexationists called a special town meeting to consider a report of the Brookline Water Commission on a plan to meet the town's water needs from that source. The request for the meeting came from John C. Abbott and William Wellman, both anti-annexationists, and 140 other residents.<sup>66</sup>

The Brookline Water Commission consisted of William Aspinwall, Amos A. Lawrence, Charles D. Head and Edward S. Philbrick, all anti-annexationists. Philbrick's role was especially important. The shift toward greater reliance on scientific bureaucracies was already well-advanced by the 1870s. Brookline was fortunate in containing many engineers, physicians, architects, lawyers and other

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<sup>65</sup> Brookline, Report of the Joint Committee on Water Supply, February 27, 1873 (Boston, 1873) 5.

<sup>66</sup> Boston Daily Advertiser, 19 March 1873: 1.

professional men who not only opposed annexation, but were prepared to put their professional reputations on the line in combatting it. Philbrick was a prominent Harvard-educated and Paris-trained civil engineer, with many years experience overseeing major railroad construction projects. His support of the plan naturally lent it greater credibility. Other respected professionals who supported the Charles River plan included local physician and Harvard faculty member Robert Amory and Dr. John D. Runkle, President of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.<sup>67</sup>

The Water Commission recommended adoption of a plan developed by the engineering firm of Shedd & Sawyer to draw up to 750,000 gallons of water a day from the Charles River. A filtration basin would be constructed on the river in Dedham. The water entering the system would be filtered through sand before entering a pumping station. A force main would then carry the filtrated water to a four million gallon reservoir, to be constructed on the southern slope of Walnut Hill in Brookline, from which the town would draw an ample supply of clean water. Shedd & Sawyer estimated the cost of the proposed system at \$370,000. If construction of this waterworks were begun immediately, they maintained, it could begin delivering water as early as January 1, 1874, and the system would be fully operational by midsummer.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> "Runkle, John Daniel," Dictionary of American Biography, 1935 edition, XIV: 225; "Robert Amory," Albert N. Marquis, ed., Who's Who in New England (Chicago: A. N. Marquis & Company, 1909) 38.

<sup>68</sup> Brookline, Report of Messrs Shedd and Sawyer to the Joint Committee of the Town of Brookline on the Supply of Water from Charles River, January 20, 1873 (Brookline, 1873) 23-31.

The March 18, 1873 town meeting on the water issue was extremely well-attended. Everyone recognized the Charles River proposal's bearing on the annexation question. As William Spencer, an anti-annexationist, noted, "The question before the meeting was not of water merely, but was the entering wedge to annexation and...every man who voted against the motion was voting for annexation" and he "did not believe there were five men in the hall, who opposed this measure who were in favor of annexation."<sup>69</sup>

The most impassioned address of the evening was delivered by William Aspinwall. An honest effort had been made to obtain Cochituate water, the anti-annexationist leader insisted, but Boston had refused to countenance such a solution. Brookline thus had no choice but to develop its own plan. Filtrated Charles River water would be perfectly healthy, he declared, but the annexationists, knowing that adoption of the proposal would sound the death knell of their movement, firmly opposed the plan. "Three fourths of those opposed to the introduction of Charles River water," Aspinwall asserted, "were not in favor of having water unless it came from the Cochituate pipes by annexation."<sup>70</sup>

Speaking in opposition were William Ingersoll Bowditch, Boston real estate attorney, and Edward A. Atkinson, prominent manufacturer and economist, both long-term residents of Brookline.<sup>71</sup> Both were mavericks.

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<sup>69</sup> Boston Daily Advertiser, 19 March 1873: 1; Brookline Transcript, 22 March 1873: 2.

<sup>70</sup> Brookline Transcript, 19 March 1873: 2.

<sup>71</sup> Bowditch was the son of the great mathematician and astronomer, Nathaniel Bowditch, and the brother of Henry Ingersoll Bowditch, distinguished

Though a Brahmin, Bowditch vigorously supported annexation. While Atkinson opposed annexation, he parted company with the antis by leading the fight against filtrated water. His position on annexation and his distinguished record of public service, lent credibility to the crusade against the Charles River plan. In addition to questioning the healthfulness of filtrated water, Atkinson was also concerned about water rights on the upper river (possible mill damages for which owners would have to be compensated).<sup>72</sup>

Atkinson asked the town to defer its decision on Charles River water until September 17 to allow time for further testing. After lengthy discussion, however, his motion was rejected by a vote of 140 to 184. Since it was now quite late in the evening, the meeting was adjourned to the following afternoon at 4 p.m., when the proposal would be voted up or down.

The Charles River Plan scored a narrow victory in the March 19, 1873 balloting---prevailing by a vote of 303 to 288. However, because the town had yet to appropriate the money to construct the waterworks, the proposal had a final hurdle to surmount. The appropriation vote, scheduled for April 14, more than three weeks away, gave the opponents of filtrated water an opportunity to further agitate the issue and to reshape public opinion. As Fern L. Nesson noted

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medical pioneer and member of the State Board of Health. His thirteen acre estate on Tappan Street, just outside of Brookline Village, valued at \$46,700 in 1873, had great development potential. Atkinson resided on Heath Street in the elite Gardner Hill section of Brookline. A History of Brookline, Massachusetts, 1630-1906, 222-223 and 188-189; Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1873, 7 and 3.

<sup>72</sup> Boston Daily Advertiser, 19 March 1873: 1.

in her history of the Boston water supply, the public distrusted filtrated water and many Massachusetts towns rejected such proposals in these years.<sup>73</sup>

Edward Atkinson assumed the leadership of Brookline's campaign against filtrated water. His strategy was both simple and effective---to pile up as much expert testimony as possible to offset that of the resident professionals who were urging acceptance of the plan. He communicated with every expert he could locate and then published all of their views (most of them negative) in the local press. He later claimed that he "overhauled the whole New England business directory to find parties that understood this business."<sup>74</sup> Atkinson was confident that the townspeople would reject the idea if they could be persuaded to evaluate it solely upon its merits---that is to say, apart from the annexation question. "If the citizens of Brookline on each side can divest the question of all connection with annexation," he declared on March 29, "I am thoroughly convinced that all will see the fitness of a more thorough investigation of it."<sup>75</sup>

In an April 5 letter to the Transcript Atkinson wrote:

To me the most judicious course would seem to be for the town to defer the appropriation for Charles River water, and to order the Selectmen to employ a competent water engineer from some other state or some place where similar questions have been treated,---to give him the summer months---and before next September, when the taking of Charles River water will become possible,---consider the report of both the possible sources of water supply named in this paper, viz., the river and the springs, or any other source.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Nesson, 34

<sup>74</sup> Brookline Transcript, 19 April 1873: 2.

<sup>75</sup> Brookline Transcript, 29 March 1873: 2.

<sup>76</sup> Brookline Transcript, 5 April 1873: 2.

With the appropriation vote pending both sides held public rallies. The opponents gathered on April 10, with Bowditch at the podium. The main speaker was Atkinson, who reviewed all the expert testimony that had been accumulated. "If good evidence were of any worth," he declared upon completing this recitation, "the Charles River water was unfit to drink. No fair minded man could stand the evidence against it." He then proceeded to offer a new proposal. There was ample pure water available, he maintained, under Brookline itself, a source which one of his many letters to the Transcript described as "on a line that extends from the same watershed that supplies Charles River in part, through the entire length of Brookline to the marsh near the river."<sup>77</sup> Atkinson's suggestion that an independent source of supply existed under Brookline doubtless upset the annexationists, who were hoping to parlay the water supply problem into public acceptance of consolidation.

The other main speaker of the evening, John W. Candler, sidestepped Atkinson's suggestion that the town tap its own underground water supply, and instead urged that Brookline collaborate with Boston in finding a solution (a somewhat disingenuous proposal in view of its known opposition to collaboration).

It was unfair [Candler asserted] to force [the Charles River plan] upon the people while there was any doubt of the purity of the water. But even if its purity were established, the town should not be put to this expense until all other available sources for a water supply have been investigated. Boston was about to lay pipes through Brookline for the purpose of obtaining a supply of water from Parker Hill, and he suggested that a proposition be

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<sup>77</sup> Boston Daily Advertiser, 11 April 1873: 1; Brookline Transcript, 12 April 1873: 4; Boston Daily Advertiser, 14 April 1873: 2.

made that Brookline put down the pipes within her limits and then take a supply from them at the rates established in Boston.<sup>78</sup>

The proponents of Charles River water met on April 12. They also presented professional testimony. President Runkle of the MIT and Dr. Amory asserted that tests of Charles River water showed that it would be perfectly safe following filtration.

The main Charles River water speech was given by William Aspinwall, and his argument was straightforwardly political. He insisted that acceptance of the plan would mean continued self-determination for Brookline, while further delay might well cost its independence. As the Boston Daily Advertiser reported, Aspinwall "characterized the various schemes brought forward as mere blinds to evade the issue, those advancing the same being perfectly well aware that there are only two ways of obtaining the desired improvement: the Cochituate and annexation, the Charles River and the town's independent action."<sup>79</sup>

No discussion was permitted on the water issue itself at the April 14, 1873 town meeting, though a motion to delay the vote led to a lively two hour procedural debate. After narrowly rejecting the motion to permit debate, balloting began on the main question. "The polls being opened," the Transcript reported, "there was a great scramble for the ballot box with the Yes and No, and the zeal of the vote distributors never was excelled in any of our town meetings." The result was a stunning defeat for filtrated water---343 in favor to 421 opposed.

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<sup>78</sup> Boston Daily Advertiser, 11 April 1873: 1.

<sup>79</sup> Boston Daily Advertiser, 14 April 1873: 1.

"The announcement of the vote caused tremendous applause," according to the Transcript.<sup>80</sup>

The defeat of the Charles River water proposal was the only victory the annexation forces ever scored in a Brookline town meeting in the entire 1870 to 1880 period, a victory they won not because the electorate favored annexation, but because it had serious reservations about filtrated water.

The most significant aspect of the defeat of the water proposal, however, was the interpretation the legislature placed upon it. The day after the town meeting voted, the State Senate approved the Brookline annexation bill by a margin of 26 to 8. In the debate that preceded the decision, Senator Morse of Marblehead declared, "The vote in Brookline on the water question showed that the citizens of that town were decidedly in favor of annexation."<sup>81</sup>

An April 16 editorial in the Boston Daily Advertiser drew the same erroneous conclusion:

The action in the Brookline town meeting Monday favorable to annexation, was followed in the State Senate yesterday by the passage of the bill authorizing the union of Brookline and Boston,---subject to the approval of the two places. The large vote in its favor---more than three to one---is, we think a pretty fair expression of the opinion of this community. In the House a stronger pressure will be brought to bear against it, but the friends of the measure are confident of carrying it there also.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Not until 1878, did Brookline resolve its water supply problem by driving 170 wells into the banks of the Charles River in Dedham, tapping the springs that fed the river rather than the river itself, as Atkinson had suggested. Brookline Transcript, 19 April 1873: 2; Curtis, 287-88.

<sup>81</sup> Boston Daily Advertiser, 16 April 1873: 4.

<sup>82</sup> Boston Daily Advertiser, 16 April 1873: 2.

The Advertiser's prediction was borne out in early May, when the House also approved the enabling law, though by a somewhat narrower margin.<sup>83</sup>

The legislature was wrong to conclude that Brookline's rejection of filtrated water meant that it supported annexation. Brookline's electors did not view annexation as a necessary corollary of its unresolved water problem. The constant in Brookline politics was the maintenance of high standards of public service---standards consistent with its elite suburban status. In the spring of 1873 that commitment to high standards led Brookline's voters to reject a water supply of questionable healthfulness. In October 1873 the same concern to maintain high standards would lead them to reject annexation.

The antis later claimed that the annexation enabling act was "secured by such bargaining, logrolling and other persuasive means as would make every honest man in Brookline, Annexationist or Anti-annexationist, if he knew what

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<sup>83</sup> The anti-annexationists had in the meantime challenged the legality of the enabling act. As early as December 1872, Brookline attorney Alfred D. Chandler wrote the Brookline Transcript contending that the annexation of any town having a population of more than 12,000 people was a violation of the Massachusetts state constitution. Later that month a bill of equity was filed in the Supreme Judicial Court by Chandler and others. On January 6, 1873 Brookline's representative in the House of Representatives introduced an order calling upon the Judiciary Committee to consider the expediency of requiring the opinion of the Justices of the Supreme Judicial Court on the question. The Judiciary Committee declined to follow this suggestion, however, and subsequently the Court handed down a decision declaring the annexation act constitutional. Brookline Transcript, 12 December 1872: 2; Alfred D. Chandler, "Brookline: A Study in Town Government," New England Magazine, August 1893: 783; Robert E. Blakesley, "Proposed and Actual Changes in Brookline's Town Government Since 1870," Brookline Chronicle, 22 November 1902: 4 ; Brookline Independent, 4 July 1873: 2.

they were, stand aghast." While no specific charges were made until the eve of the referendum, these accusations warrant examination.<sup>84</sup>

The charges of "bargaining" and "logrolling" reached the public in two letters that appeared in the pages of the Brookline Independent on September 27 and October 4, 1873. While they were presented as the opinion of a private citizen, identified only as "Z. D.," their prominent location in the last two issues of the Independent (a paper founded on July 4, 1873 to preserve "the independence of the town, and to resist to the uttermost its threatened extinction by absorption into the City of Boston") suggests that they were written by the anti-annexationist leadership.

The "Z. D." letters accused the Boston Water Power Company (General Whitney's concern), its stockholders, and other owners of Back Bay land of masterminding annexation. They did so, "Z. D." charged, in an effort to stem, not increase, development in Brookline to protect their heavy investment in Back Bay real estate. Especially culpable was General Whitney, the writer declared.

They [the Boston Water Power Company] found a most efficient instrument in their chief officer who was himself a resident and a property holder in the town, but whose interest as a salaried officer and a holder of many shares of Water Power stock identified his pecuniary interest with that of the Company, and outweighed any obligation he might otherwise have felt himself under to his friends and neighbors in Brookline.

"Z. D." accused General Whitney and the Boston Water Power Company of not only masterminding annexation, but of resorting to bribery to promote its cause. A member of the State Senate when that body passed the enabling act in

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<sup>84</sup> Brookline Independent, 4 July 1873: 1.

1873, Whitney was accused of boasting to an opponent, "Now you see what money can do!"<sup>85</sup>

The charge that the developers of the Back Bay promoted annexation in order to slow the rate of development in Brookline is unconvincing. The Back Bay was developing at a furious rate in the late 1860s and early 1870s, with some 500 buildings constructed between 1866 and 1873, the highest level of construction activity in the district's history. This was occurring, moreover, at a time when building activity and population growth in Brookline were relatively stagnant. Moreover, the rationale that the annexationists were advancing for joining Boston---that it would spur development in Brookline---totally contradicted the charge.<sup>86</sup>

The author's second letter to the Brookline Independent went on to accuse the annexationists of being motivated by a land speculation scheme of another kind. An understanding had been reached, "Z. D." alleged (without specifying how the object would be accomplished), whereby annexation to Boston would lead to a change in the route of a projected extension of Commonwealth Avenue. Instead of running through the center of Brookline, this roadway would be built on the line of Brighton Avenue at the northern edge of the town. "The bulk of the Brookline annexationists reside, or own lands lying between Beacon Street and Charles River," the writer charged. "All the influential and active annexationists, with one or two exceptions, live within those limits, and seven-eighths of the whole

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<sup>85</sup> Brookline Independent, 27 September 1873: 2.

<sup>86</sup> Bunting, 5; Karr, "The Transformation of an Elite Suburb," 154; Curtis, 213.

party having any pecuniary interest in the question reside there."<sup>87</sup> (emphasis mine)

Did the principal spokesmen for annexation at the 1872 legislative hearings own substantial real estate in the vicinity of Brighton Avenue, as "Z. D." maintained? Unlike the charges about legislative logrolling, which involved hearsay, those concerning annexationist landholdings in the Brighton Avenue area can be verified through the examination of tax records and maps.

Of the fifty-seven leaders of the Brookline annexation movement whose names were published in the Boston Post on October 6, 1873 only ten owned land in the area between Beacon Street and Brighton Avenue, a far cry from the seven-eighths that "Z.D." alleged. In all, the annexation leaders held 73.5 acres in the area north of Beacon Street, some 14.4 percent of their total landholdings. Thus the determining role "Z. D." attributed to the Brighton Avenue project seems groundless.

There can be little question, however, that landowners---particularly those who held property in the northern half of Brookline---were the principal supporters of annexation. The great majority of the annexation leaders (88 percent) owned property in northern half of the town---that is to say, north of the line of Boylston and Brighton Streets. Their combined holdings in that section totalled 283 acres, property with a total valuation of more than \$1.5 million. While many anti-annexationist also owned land in northern Brookline, the parcels the

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<sup>87</sup> Brookline Independent, 4 October 1873: 2.

annexationists held tended to be larger and less developed than those of their opponents.<sup>88</sup>

In short, while there was no solid basis for the charge that a majority of the annexationists expected to benefit from a specific public works project, there is ample evidence that annexationists expected to profit from the increase in Brookline land values that they confidently believed would follow annexation.

A comparative analysis of the landholdings of annexationists and anti-annexationists establishes some interesting contrasts. Anti-annexationist landholdings were concentrated in two areas primarily: Brookline's elite neighborhoods and the streets north and west of Brookline Village. In the case of the Gardner Hill and Longwood/ Cottage Farm districts, the properties consisted chiefly of Brahmin estates---those of Ignatius Sargent (71.3 acres), John L. Gardner (28.5 acres), James S. Amory (19 acres), Amos A. Lawrence (18 acres), and Augustus Lowell (10 acres).<sup>89</sup> The owners of these estates were far more interested in preserving Brookline's elite character than in driving up the value of their landholdings.

The same holds true for the anti-annexationists living nearer Brookline Village, mostly prosperous businessmen who regarded Brookline as an ideal residential setting for their families, and who were eager to keep it that way: such

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<sup>88</sup> Brookline, Tax List for 1873, 2-76.

<sup>89</sup> The names upon which this analysis was based were drawn from two sources, both published in the October 4, 1873 issue of the Brookline Independent: a listing of the officers of a September 30, 1873 anti-annexation meeting and a roster of the Brookline residents appointed to the Anti-annexation Rallying Committee for the October 7 referendum. These lists contained a total of eighty-eight names. Brookline Independent, 4 October 1873: 1-2.

men as MIT President John Runkle; attorney Theophilus P. Chandler; Boston provisions dealer Henry G. Fay; Elijah C. Emerson, President of the Middlesex Horse Railroad; John D. Sturtevant, Boston manufacturer, to name only a few.

The Anti-annexationists were as a rule not much interested in land speculation. The only one who was heavily involved in development at this stage was William Aspinwall, owner of 64 acres on Aspinwall Hill, near the intersection of Beacon and Washington Streets, land with an assessed valuation of \$237,700.<sup>90</sup> Though a developer, Aspinwall firmly believed that Brookline would be better off independent than by having to compete with other developing neighborhoods for basic services. Aspinwall also played a key role in recruiting Irish support for anti-annexationism. On the eve of the referendum he organized the Anti-annexationist Rallying Committee, which included a substantial number of working class and Irish-Catholic members.<sup>91</sup>

That the annexation movement failed in Brookline, at a time when it was prevailing elsewhere, stemmed from two factors chiefly: the community's elite status and the political skillfulness of the opposition. The antis ran a very shrewd campaign. When the Transcript, Brookline's only newspaper, ceased publication in May 1873, they filled the journalistic vacuum by founding the Independent.

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<sup>90</sup> Aspinwall had drawn up plans for the development of this acreage as early as 1857, but little progress had been made. For further information on Aspinwall's activities as a Brookline developer (plans which only came to fruition after 1878), see Karr, "The Transformation of an Elite Suburb," 260-261.

<sup>91</sup> The Anti-annexation Rallying Committee included four carpenters and two house painters. In addition, twenty Irishmen sat on the committee. Most of the latter were small property owners. The wealthiest by far was contractor Cornelius O'Hearne, a resident of Davis Avenue near Brookline Village, who paid taxes on property assessed at \$16,500. Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1873, 54.

Though it lasted only five months, this paper rendered invaluable service to the anti cause by pouring an unrelenting fire upon annexation and its advocates. The editor (none was listed on its pages) was almost certainly Aspinwall. The paper made little pretense of objectivity, declaring in its very first issue, "We shall not refuse to open our columns to communications advocating the other side of this question, but we shall not consider it our duty to make this concession to our opponents, and we shall only make it upon our own terms."<sup>92</sup>

Nor did the Independent hesitate to champion anti-annexationism in highly personal terms, if such were deemed necessary. The target of one such attack declared, "There is not a newspaper in New England, edited by respectable men, that would publish in its columns a communication so false and malicious as this, publishing the names of individuals, and imputing to them corrupt motives, without any foundation for the charges."<sup>93</sup>

Though clearly partisan, the Independent furnished a relatively complete account of a key stage of the annexation struggle---the three months leading up to the October 7 referendum. In contrast to Brighton, where the story at the equivalent stage is highly fragmented, the Brookline story is extremely rich in detail by virtue of the coverage the Independent provided.<sup>94</sup>

The antis advanced two main arguments in the Independent, both financial in thrust: first, that Boston was in no position to deliver on the public improvements the annexationists were promising; and second, that annexation

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<sup>92</sup> Brookline Independent, 16 August 1873: 2

<sup>93</sup> Brookline Independent, 16 August 1873: 2.

<sup>94</sup> Brookline Independent, 4 July 1873: 2.

would lead to higher taxes.<sup>95</sup> On August 2 it even questioned Boston's capacity to supply Brookline with water, charging that the city's supply was inadequate to meet its own needs, not to mention Brookline's.<sup>96</sup>

The Independent also rendered service to the anti cause by responding to pro-annexation articles as they appeared in the Boston papers and by giving additional currency to anti-annexation articles.<sup>97</sup> Its August 16th edition, for example, took issue with a pro-annexation editorial from the Democratic Boston Post and reprinted an anti-annexation editorial from the Republican Boston Journal.<sup>98</sup>

It labeled the Post's contention that consolidation would lead both to lower taxes and lower gas rates as "ineffably silly," the work either of an inexperienced writer or a Brookline annexationist, not of an objective journalist. "The people of Brookline read the papers," the Independent declared heatedly, "and understand at least the first four rules of arithmetic, and that an \$11.50 tax in Brookline, which pays all the current expenses, including betterments, the whole expense of the sidewalks, and watering the streets, at the public expense, is not larger than \$14.00 in Boston." As to the promise of lower gas rates, the Independent declared, "the gas consumers of Brookline know that their gas company is

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<sup>95</sup> Brookline Independent, 25 July 1873: 2.

<sup>96</sup> Brookline Independent, 2 August 1873: 2.

<sup>97</sup> Boston Post, 6 October 1873: 3; Brookline, Tax List for the Year 1873, 2-76; G. M. Hopkins, Atlas of Brookline (1874); Vital Records of Brookline, Massachusetts to the End of the Year 1849 (Salem, 1929) 33-34; Boston, City Directory for 1873 (Boston, 1873).

<sup>98</sup> Brookline Independent, 16 August 1873: 2.

earning only a fair dividend for its stockholders." They know, it continued, that the Boston Gaslight Company had not yet extended its services even to Roxbury and Dorchester, districts that had been part of the city for several years. "They know...that Roxbury is supplied still by the Roxbury company, with gas, at about the same price that was paid before annexation in 1867, and that Dorchester is paying in 1873, four years after annexation, the same price (\$4.00 per 1000 feet of gas) that Brookline is paying to-day."<sup>99</sup>

Lacking a local paper sympathetic to their cause, the annexationists were obliged to rely upon the Boston Post, the city's only Democratic daily, as their principal organ. One of seven dailies published in Boston at the time, the Post in fact had a relatively small circulation. In his history of American journalism, Frank L. Mott described the paper as nearly moribund in the 1870s. Thus the annexationists were at a distinct disadvantage in the struggle to influence Brookline's voters.<sup>100</sup>

In its August 23 issue, under the headline, "The Post and Annexation," after reviewing that paper's coverage of the issue, the Independent's editor confidently asserted: "I believe I have disposed of the arguments of the Post.... If you think my efforts deserving of encouragement, I will take up in the same manner, any new arguments that may appear in that usually enlightened but in

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<sup>99</sup> Boston Post, 6 August 1873: 2; Boston Post, 7 August 1873: 2; Boston Post, 9 August 1873: 2; Brookline Independent, 16 August 1873: 2; Brookline Independent, 23 August 1873: 2.

<sup>100</sup> Frank L. Mott, American Journalism: A History, 1690-1960 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962) 452-453.

this instance, sadly misguided newspaper. The people of Brookline want "FACT NOT FICTION."<sup>101</sup> (emphasis in original)

By contrast, the Independent described the Boston Journal's August 11 anti-annexation editorial entitled "The Annexationist Bubble," as one "which should be read carefully by every voter in Brookline."<sup>102</sup> An influential Republican newspaper with a wide circulation outside of the city, the Journal had concluded that annexation was neither in the interests of Boston nor of the satellite towns.<sup>103</sup>

The promoters of these schemes are largely interested in land speculation, and the golden dreams of many induce them without second thought to advocate annexation. Many who count upon an immediate rise in real estate will be woefully disappointed. There is no active demand for land which cannot be supplied by Roxbury and Dorchester districts, and it will be some years before the three hundred and fifty million feet of vacant land in Boston will be built over.

The financial argument---the contention that Boston was incapable of keeping the promises the annexationists were making---would be repeated over and over again in the pages of the Independent in the weeks before the annexation referendum. In assuming this position, the Journal lent substantial credibility to a key anti-annexation argument.

Boston today is passing through a critical era. The large fire imposed unexpected burdens on the municipality. During the past eight years street improvements have been popular, and the amount expended for them very

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<sup>101</sup> This characterization of the Democratic Boston Post as "usually enlightened" would suggest that the writer of this spirited rejoinder was Democrat William Aspinwall. Brookline Independent, 23 August 1873: 2.

<sup>102</sup> Brookline Independent, 16 August 1873: 2.

<sup>103</sup> Stanwood, Edward, Boston Illustrated (Boston, 1878) 79-80.

large. We find ourselves today with a debt of \$37,000,000, to be increased for improvements on water works, for a new court house, for the enlargement of City Hall and new buildings for the poor and criminal classes, which will carry the debt to \$50,000,000 within a few years. The annual taxation for interest will not be far from three and a half millions, while the annual taxation of a percentage to create a sinking fund for its payment at maturity will not fall short of a million and a half more, making an annual tax levy of five millions of dollars to be added to the amount raised by taxation for ordinary expenses. The increased valuation of Boston will no doubt be large, but when the percentage of taxation increases faster than the percentage of valuation, we hold that a city cannot be said to be substantially prosperous. Every increase of the debt is a mortgage placed upon every piece of real estate and all the personal property of the city.

The time was not ripe for annexation, the Journal asserted, and it would be dishonest of Boston to absorb surrounding towns on the basis of promises it was clearly incapable of keeping.

Such being our financial condition, it may be urged that we ought to encourage annexation, for we shall have a larger basis of valuation from which to raise this money. This is true, and it is for this very reason that many propose to accept the proposed union of West Roxbury, Brighton and Brookline. But do we want consolidation upon this understanding?... We might as well be frank at once, and say to them: We want more taxable valuation, not land; We want taxpayers, not new citizens with new wants, and if you come into our fold you will have to wait until we have attended to important wants which have been postponed.<sup>104</sup>

A major assault on Boston's vaunted efficiency came on September 13 in an editorial entitled "Brookline and Boston Sewerage." Here the Independent raised a second key theme of the anti-annexation campaign---the argument that Boston, with its polglot population and municipal charter, was more susceptible to corruption than Brookline, where government rested upon a system of direct representation and a more educated electorate. In this instance the Independent

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<sup>104</sup> Boston Journal, 11 August 1873: 4.

called the attention of its readers to a recent Boston Courier article which had harshly criticized the Boston Board of Aldermen's Committee on Sewers, the agency which initiated drainage projects: "A more melancholy display of incompetence is not recorded in the municipal history of Boston," the editorial declared, concluding "It is time that so important a position should be filled by men of at least ordinary ability and honesty."<sup>105</sup>

The Independent's September 20 issue hit the annexationists on several fronts simultaneously. A long and closely reasoned editorial summed up the by now familiar arguments for rejecting annexation. First there was Boston's inability to furnish better services, whether it be water, gas, roads or sewers. "All things in Brookline are as good as they are in Boston, or can be made so, if the citizens only choose to make them so by their votes in town meeting," the paper declared. But even if that were not the case, it continued, it was unrealistic to expect Boston to devote resources to the improvement of Brookline's services when there were so many other demands on the city's attention. "They would take Brookline's money and spend it in the 'Burnt District' in widening streets, or in raising the grade of the Ruggles Street District, or in draining the fever-breeding marshes of East Boston." The Independent also reminded its readers that Brookline contained less than 7,000 residents and would therefore have only two seats out of seventy-six on the Boston Common Council, with no guarantee of representation at all on the Board of Aldermen. It expressed its confidence that the people of Brookline were too wise to be seduced by the glib promises of the annexationists.

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<sup>105</sup> Brookline Independent, 13 September 1873: 2.

They know that while they can have their own purse in their own hands, they can spend their money as they please, and what they spend benefits themselves and their neighbors, and is not used perhaps to their injury in advancing the interests of distant, rival territories.<sup>106</sup>

Great excitement gripped Brookline in the days immediately before the October 7 referendum as both sides held large public meetings to demonstrate broad public support of their cause.

The anti-annexationists held the first such meeting on Tuesday, September 30, filling Brookline's Town Hall to capacity. According to the Independent, "the audience comprised many ladies, and the Brookline band, which was stationed in the gallery, rendered numerous selections before the meeting was called together." The atmosphere was high-spirited, almost celebratory, the antis feeling confident that they were about to score a great victory.

A committee of thirty-seven officers was announced from the podium, a roster top-heavy with prominent businessmen and landowners, including such Brahmins as John L. Gardner, Ignatius Sargent, James S. Amory, Amos Lawrence, and John D. Sturtevant. Conspicuously absent from the list, however, were Irish names. Only later, in appointing a rallying committee of seventy-four to get out the vote, did the antis think to include the Irish, underscoring the subordinate political position they occupied in Brookline vis-a-vis Brighton.

The speeches at the September 30 meeting provided little more than a reprise of the arguments that had been appearing on the pages of the

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<sup>106</sup> Brookline Independent, 20 September 1873: 2.

Independent for the past three months. Charles H. Drew spoke to the issue of the adequacy of a town meeting versus a municipal form of government, contrasting Brookline's direct and highly democratic decisionmaking procedures with those of Boston "where measures could only be carried by lobbying, and where the public were a long way removed from their rulers." Drew also expressed concern for Brookline's schools: "The representation upon the School Board of Boston," he pointed out, "would be so small that the people of Brookline would have hardly any voice in the management of its schools." East India merchant Thomas Parsons ridiculed another favorite pro-annexation argument, the notion that Brookline's absorption would somehow contribute to the purification of Boston politics. It was one thing to contain the working classes in deferential Brookline with its rigid social structure, quite another in discordant Boston. Colonel Charles B. Fox of Dorchester took up the theme of unfulfilled promises, speaking of the disappointment the people of his community had suffered since annexation, noting that "to his knowledge, not a foot of sewers had been built by the city since annexation had taken place." Moses Williams, Jr., a young attorney and a Republican candidate for State Representative in the upcoming election, described annexation as a plot hatched up by land speculators. Incumbent State Representative Austin H. Benton gave an account of how the annexationist bill had been "lobbied and log-rolled" through the legislature, and expressed confidence that the October 7 vote would settle the issue "in such a manner that it could not be heard for several years."<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Brookline Independent, 4 October, 1873: 2.

On Saturday, October 4, the annexationists gathered at Town Hall in similar fashion. According to a Journal account of the meeting,

There was considerable enthusiasm manifested and a small procession was formed, a short time before the opening of the meeting, headed by the Hibernian Band, which marched around the edifice, bearing transparencies with appropriate notices. The procession entered the hall at a quarter before eight, filling it, with those already there, to the utmost capacity.<sup>108</sup>

The featured speakers at this rally were William I. Bowditch, General James S. Whitney, and John W. Candler of Brookline, followed by Patrick J. Collins and M. F. Dickinson, Jr. of Boston. Bowditch resorted mostly to rhetorical flourishes, heaping praise on "the historic renown" of Boston. The speakers also cited (a by now familiar litany) the superior facilities and public services that the city furnished its residents---better schools (the Latin and English High Schools came in for particular praise), police, sewerage, libraries, and Boston City Hospital. Understandably, no mention was made of the fire department. In addition, a larger political unit would help sustain the city's commercial position, which was the foundation of Brookline's as well as Boston's prosperity.

General Whitney's speech emphasized the strong link that already existed between Boston and its near suburb, declaring,

We are part and parcel of the population of Boston now. Our merchants go there to do their business; our lawyers go there to find their clients; our bankers go there to use their capital; our insurance men go there to get their salaries; we all get our bread and butter from Boston. Could you blot Boston out of sight, and make a Dead Sea of it, the township of Brookline would not today support a population of two thousand inhabitants. And do you propose to turn your backs upon the great City of Boston? No,

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<sup>108</sup> Boston Journal, 6 October, 1873: 3.

Gentlemen. Do not be frightened by the bugbear of the Water Power Company and the Water Power President.<sup>109</sup>

The final anti-annexationist rally, held in Brookline Town Hall the night before the referendum, was also an elaborate affair, calculated to appeal to an element the antis had neglected in their previous gathering---Brookline's largely Irish working class. The Boston Journal described the events immediately preceding the meeting as follows:

The opponents of annexation introduced their programme with a grand torchlight procession, of which Mr. Cornelius O'Hearne was Marshall. There were upward of a hundred torches in line, and the procession was headed by the Brookline Hibernian Band, and they bore transparencies with such mottoes as "Brookline the Paradise of Working Men"; "Hands Off Brookline, The Flower of Massachusetts"; "Brookline, 1706---B. Will Never Destroy its Own Existence"; "Great Cities, Great Sores" and "Small Towns: The Nurseries of Freedom."

After marching through the principal streets they were welcomed to the Town Hall by a brilliant display of rockets, and marched into the upper hall, which was filled with a large audience, comprising many ladies. Handbills were distributed contrasting the results of annexation with those of anti-annexation, and drawing conclusions that the latter was by far the most desirable to the mechanics and laboring men."<sup>110</sup>

The size, enthusiasm, and inclusive character of this election-eve demonstration foreshadowed the decisive victory the anti-annexationists were about to score.

The final annexation rally, held on the first floor of Town Hall on the same evening was, by contrast, a much tamer affair. While no new arguments were advanced by the speakers at either of these gatherings, two speeches given at

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<sup>109</sup> Boston Post, 6 October 1873: 3.

<sup>110</sup> Boston Journal, 7 October 1873: 3.

this last annexation gathering warrant examination. The most poetic address of the evening showed how universal was the town's image of as an elite community. William H. Foster, a Boston merchant, described Brookline as

a beautiful princess just emerging into womanhood. She was without a rival: the patron of art, science, rhetoric, music, literature and education. She walked in beauty; her eyes were lodestones and her breath sweet air. There was a garden of her own about her. The ponds and her beautiful reservoir, like pearls, rested on her swelling bosom. The everlasting hills were like a diadem resting upon her beautiful brow.

And now, Foster continued,

Boston like a prince was the bridegroom who came with open hands and loving heart to offer her his treasures and affection. Brookline blushingly accepted, and who should forbid the banns.<sup>111</sup>

The analogy had another dimension, however, which may not have been lost upon Foster's listeners---the profit potentialities if this projected marriage of Brookline and Boston were ever consummated.

The most interesting statement of the evening was that made by Horace M. Fisher, another Boston merchant, and the only member of that prominent family to take sides in the annexation controversy. Reflecting the frustration the annexationists must have felt at their failure to enlist the support of the bulk of the town's working class, Fisher complained bitterly that the town was

controlled by men who brought in men from the slums of Brookline Village, the only part of whose boots which touched the stairs as they came up being the top. They were simply tools in the hands of devils. If they were not annexed to Boston the Government would soon fall into the hands of demagogues.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Boston Journal, 7 October 1873: 3

<sup>112</sup> Boston Journal, 7 October 1873: 3.

October 7, 1873 dawned clear and warm. This day was to witness the greatest electoral turnout in Brookline's history. The polls opened promptly at 9 a.m. The first vote of the day was cast by William A. Wellman, a member of the Anti-annexation Rallying Committee, "whose face beamed after he had voted with the brightness that only illumines the countenance of those who know they have done right," the Independent declared grandiloquently. Voting was especially brisk in the early hours, owing to the large number of Boston businessmen who went to the polls before leaving for work.

At no point during the day, noted the Independent, did the annexationists command a majority. "The Boston papers said that the annexationists led for an hour or more. This was not the case. There was not an instant throughout the day when the 'No' vote did not outweigh the 'Yes' in the proportion of never less than two and sometimes four to one." The largest concentration of annexation votes were cast in the late afternoon following the arrival of the 4:45 train out of Boston.

The result was announced by Charles D. Head, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, five minutes after the closing of the polls---a stunning defeat for annexation.

Yes.....299

No.....706

The scene that ensued beggars all description [the Independent reported]. For more than five minutes the hall, containing nearly a thousand men

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crowded together as close as they could stand, resounded with the cheers of the most joyful band of men that ever was seen. Men waved their hats in the air, mounted on the chairs to give more effect to their enthusiasm, and shook hands with everyone that was near them. Only here and there could one see the dejected face of some annexationist braver than his fellows, who had staid [sic] to see the last shot fired and the battle ended.<sup>113</sup>

The battle over annexation in Brookline had been an unequal struggle. The town's working class population, while numerous, had a long history of political quiescence. While some working class electors were attracted to consolidation by the prospect of increased employment and political opportunities, the majority were more concerned with protecting existing economic relationships than with cutting loose either economically or politically. In the final analysis, however, Brookline's annexation contest had been fought for the minds and hearts of the long-dominant middle and upper classes. Only momentarily (in considering the water issue) did the electorate give even the slightest sign of wavering. The outcome was in fact never in serious doubt. Brookline's singular social reputation, its enormous wealth, and its demonstrated capacity to provide superior infrastructure and public services in the context of a relatively low tax rate undercut the consolidationist argument at every turn. The elite suburb's large middle and upper classes had carved out a zone of safety on the western edge of Boston and declined to entrust its future to the political uncertainties and contentiousness of a polyglot metropolis.

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<sup>113</sup> Brookline Independent, 11 October 1873: 2.

## **CONCLUSION**

As the preceding chapters demonstrate, the towns of Brighton and Brookline, though sharing important characteristics in their early years, approached suburbanization in strikingly different ways.

Fundamental continuity marked the suburbanization of Brookline. First came a handful of wealthy Bostonians seeking refuge from the troubled social and political climate of the late colonial era. Then, in the 1795 to 1850 period, many of Boston's leading families established country estates in the Gardner Hill

and Longwood-Cottage Farm sections of the town. These wealthy residents (who typically resided in rural Brookline only part of the year) rarely involved themselves in local affairs; their enclaves, or "little circles of territory," were thus in Brookline without being of Brookline. Local government continued under the domination of the town's farmers and artisans until the mid-19th century. Only with the establishment of regularly scheduled public transportation facilities (omnibuses, horsecars, and especially the railroad) did large numbers of prosperous Boston commuters move out to Brookline, quickly assuming control of local government. This element had greater need of the services local government could provide than their elite predecessors and soon turned it to the business of providing good streets, sidewalks, street lighting, schools, and police protection.

While proximity to the city and splendid scenery were important to Brookline's rise as Boston's premier suburb, more important still was an almost total absence of commercial and industrial development in the town. A fringe zone economy never developed in Brookline. Only in the sphere of commercial agricultural or market gardening did it render key services to the urban market. These agricultural pursuits were compatible with the prevailing rural ideal that was fostering the movement of middle and upper class families from the city to its periphery. Had Brookline been dotted with slaughterhouses like Brighton, middle and upper class commuters would never have come to Brookline in significant numbers.

The lack of an industrial base also significantly influenced the experience of Brookline's working class. While a substantial number of Irish immigrants settled in Brookline in the 1840s and 1850s, the opportunities for advancement

were comparatively limited. Employment opportunities were restricted to two spheres chiefly---jobs in domestic service or in the construction and maintenance of public infrastructure. While this type of employment offered a measure of security, it did so in a context both of lower wages and limited economic and political opportunities. The Irish were confined moreover to two highly circumscribed residential milieus: the estates of their employers or a densely populated ethnic ghetto, the Marsh, on the banks of the Muddy River. The dependence of this large working class population upon the middle and upper classes and upon town government (which the middle and upper classes controlled) for employment explains the slower rate of material and political progress Brookline's Irish attained vis-a-vis Brighton's Irish.

Little conflict marked Brookline's developmental history. The town's farmers and artisans, as owners of large blocs of land and as providers of services to the town's developing residential economy, were among the chief beneficiaries of rapid residential development.

In 1873 Brookline rejected annexation to Boston by a decisive two-to-one margin. Support for consolidation was substantially weaker in the elite suburb than elsewhere because a loss of political self-determination would have imperilled the town's capacity to maintain the high standards of public service upon which its reputation rested. The only elements that gave annexation their support were those Boston commuters who identified with the metropolis more strongly than with Brookline and a group of North Brookline farmers and land speculators who were disappointed at the slow growth rate the town had experienced since 1860 and who hoped that consolidation would foster rapid development. The preponderance of Brookline's middle and upper class

residents were satisfied with the status quo. Not even the town's failure to resolve its troublesome water supply problem shook their resolve. Brookline's per capita tax base was substantially larger than Boston's and was expanding. There was thus little economic incentive to embrace annexation. More important than the economic issue was the question of social status. Relinquishing its independence would have served to deprive Brookline's upper classes of the power to control their residential environment.

If we conceive of Brookline as representing one extreme on the spectrum of possible approaches to suburbanization, then Brighton, a market town which embraced the goal of large-scale residential development quite late, and from quite different motives, may well represent the opposite extreme.

Brighton's developmental history was marked by two major discontinuities. The town reached its first developmental watershed in 1776, when a regional cattle market was established at the center of a prosperous agricultural community. The transition from farm community to market town was thereafter quite rapid. The weekly Brighton Cattle Fair drew thousands of farmers and livestock dealers into Brighton. Hotels, inns, and taverns were established to "accomodate" this transient population and the town soon acquired a well-deserved reputation as a center of deceptive business practices, theft, rowdiness, heavy drinking, gambling and wreckless driving. A burgeoning slaughtering and meatpacking industry rose alongside the booming cattle trade. The penned livestock, cattle drives, piggeries, piles of carelessly disposed offal and manure, slaughterhouses, varnish works and bone fertilizer plants emitted unpleasant odors and polluted the town's ponds and streams. Because Brighton's fringe zone economy contained this unusually high number of noxious

industries the town proved resistant to the forces generating suburbanization. While it contained important industries that posed no barrier to suburbanization (horticulture and market gardening for example) the cattle and slaughtering trades were the engine of the local economy.

Though Brighton was as well-served as Brookline from a transportation standpoint, Bostonians who were seeking to escape the noise, congestion, and perils of an urban environment, avoided the market town. As late as 1870, commuters comprised only 8.2 percent of the work force of the town and many of them (at least one-fourth) were commuting to Boston chiefly to dispose of the goods produced in Brighton.

While Brighton attracted few commuters, large numbers of Irish immigrants entered the town in the late 1840s and 1850s. Industrialized Brighton afforded these immigrants greater opportunities for economic and social advancement than suburbanized Brookline, as evidenced by the taxable wealth of the two populations in 1870. Many enterprising Irishmen built fortunes in the livestock and slaughtering trades. The Irish also made quicker political gains in industrial Brighton than they did in residential Brookline. Patrick Moley, an Irish immigrant, sat on Brighton's Board of Selectmen as early as 1870. Another Irishman, Michael Norton, held the post of Town Clerk and Town Treasurer simultaneously in 1873, the year before Brighton's annexation to Boston.

Brighton's town government was dominated by an indigenous business elite before 1870. Concern to protect its prosperous cattle and slaughtering trades from competition had prompted the community to seek independence in 1807. The protection of those interests remained the central concern of Brighton's political leadership for the next six decades. While the town spent

liberally in the 1840 to 1870 period on services that furthered the interests or enhanced the prestige of its resident entrepreneurs---on such things as the public schools, public facilities, and fire protection---it failed to confront in any consistent way the problems of deteriorating public health and increasing public disorder, which were direct by-products of its commercial and industrial economy.

Only in 1870, when it became clear that there was more money to be made from residential development than from the declining cattle and slaughtering trades, did a handful of particularly enterprising and politically skilled leaders initiate a program (this being the second great watershed in the town's developmental history) aimed at transforming Brighton's fringe zone economy into one that could accommodate increasing numbers of middle-class and upper class families. The reforms met stiff resistance. The reform leadership forged an alliance with the town's principal Irish leaders whereby jobs, contracts, and political offices were furnished in exchange for support of a more rationalized cattle and slaughtering industry, heavy borrowing, and expanded services---financial policies that ultimately necessitated annexation to Boston. The reform effort also took advantage of a growing state public health reform movement, which enjoyed strong support in the legislature. A vigorous application of state power forced reluctant Brighton slaughterhouse proprietors to comply with the reform program. That program involved a legislatively-mandated consolidation of the slaughtering industry in North Brighton (the Brighton Abattoir); the removal of the cattle yards from the center of the town to the same industrialized neighborhood; the investment of a million dollars of borrowed money in infrastructure improvements; and finally, the use of the resulting massive town debt to leverage public approval of consolidation with Boston. In contrast to

Brookline, where annexation suffered defeat by a two-to-one margin, in Brighton it received the support of four out of every five voters, the highest margin of victory in any of Boston's suburb.

Thus Brighton and Brookline offer strikingly different case studies of suburbanization on the periphery of Boston, examples which the models advanced in earlier works do not fit in key respects.

The model advanced by Sam Bass Warner in Streetcar Suburbs seems especially inappropriate to Brookline, a town which had developed into a mature suburb well before 1870. While streetcars played a somewhat more important role in Brighton's developmental history, it was the reform measures of the 1870 to 1873 period that unleashed the forces of residential development by eliminating the historic impedimenta---the slaughterhouses and cattle yards---that had blocked suburban development for decades. Transportation improvements would not have effected the desired changes in and of themselves.

The experience of Brighton and Brookline was at variance also with that of Cambridge and Somerville, as outlined in Henry Binford's The First Suburb's. The peripheral towns, Binford tells us, developed economies based upon the exploitation of opportunities available at the city's edge such as the assembling, preparing and transporting of goods to and from urban markets, so-called "fringe zone economies." While certainly true of Brighton, such was not the case in Brookline, as we have already had occasion to note. The only city-oriented service that Brookline provided was commercial agriculture.

Binford also maintains that the peripheral communities were significantly influenced by general transportation improvements long before the introduction of regularly scheduled public transportation lines. As early as 1840, he notes, 11

percent of Cambridgeport's residents were already commuting to Boston and were exercising a disproportionate amount of influence in local affairs by virtue of their high economic status, owning some 25 percent of local property.<sup>1</sup>

No such phenomenon occurred in Brookline or Brighton, however. In Brookline commuters began to gain significant influence only after the introduction of rail service in 1848, while in Brighton they failed to achieve a leadership position at any point before annexation. Even the Warren faction, which sought to propel the town toward suburbanization in the 1870 to 1873 period, consisted chiefly of local entrepreneurs. As late as 1855, more than twenty years after the introduction of rail service to Brighton, the town's commuters still comprised only 6 percent of its workforce and paid only 7.4 percent of its property taxes. Fifteen years later, during the reform period, Brighton commuters made up a scant 8.2 percent of the town's workforce.

Binford's description of the changes that town government experienced in the early 19th century also has limited application. His three-tier model of development does not fit the experience of either Brighton or Brookline. While the governments of both towns became much more service-oriented in the 1840 to 1870 period, neither experienced the three-stage transformation Binford posits. In Brighton leadership was exercised by an entrepreneurial elite uninterrupted down to 1870. The champions of residential development in Brighton were few and their often half-hearted efforts to clean up the town proved ineffectual. Change came to Brighton only when a body of businessmen---entrepreneurs in the political as well as the economic sense---initiated a bold

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<sup>1</sup> Binford, 100.

program for change in 1870. The transition to service-oriented government in Brookline, by contrast, was a direct consequence of the large-scale middle and upper class commuter influx of the post-1848 period, and occurred with a minimum of conflict.

While Brighton and Brookline achieved suburbanization in very different ways, they occupied common ground in one key respect. Both were profoundly influenced by the new economic order that was taking shape in 19th century America---Brighton directly, as an arena of unregulated competitive enterprise; Brookline indirectly, as a zone of safety for the upper classes from the social conditions that unregulated capitalism was generating.

It has been suggested that Brookline's 1873 decision marked a turning point in the history of annexation---suburban communities thereafter proving more resistant to the lures of consolidation.<sup>2</sup> However, Brookline represents a highly unusual case, that of a premier elite suburb, which necessarily diminishes its usefulness as an historical model. Brighton also represents a unique case, though of an altogether different variety. The heavy concentration of nuisance industries that existed in the market town impeded suburbanization for decades. A combination of public and private initiative and large-scale investment in infrastructure removed the impedimenta in the 1870 to 1873 period, but also created a fiscal crisis that rendered annexation inevitable.

This, in turn, brings us back to the central thesis of Uncommon Suburbs---the contention that no single historical model can possibly adequately explain suburbanization; that the phenomenon is much too varied to admit of a single model; and that even the closest of neighbors became suburbs in strikingly

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<sup>2</sup> Jackson, Crabgrass Frontier, 149; Chudacoff and Smith, 95.

different ways, as exemplified by the experience of the neighboring towns of Brookline and Brighton, Massachusetts.

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