

FIRST PLACE

Cora Casteel

HARRIET AND JOAN LALLY OF WALTHAM

If you look up the word 'history' in a dictionary... it reads "A narrative of events, a story,"¹ The story of Joan and Harriet Lally helped me to understand the history of Waltham in the 1900s. Their story is similar to those heard around the nation. It is a story of immigration, prejudice, hard work and reward. They helped me understand some of Waltham's past. Their story even helped me find out something about myself.

IMMIGRATION AND PREJUDICE

Joan and Harriet's paternal grandparents immigrated to the United States from Galway, Ireland to pursue a better life in America. Their grandfather's name was Edward Cuniffe. He was a mason who worked in Lowell, and died when Joan and Harriet's father, also named Edward Cuniffe, was only three months old. He left a wife with seven children to support. After being widowed, she took in sewing for money. One story Joan and Harriet's father told them was that when he was 10 years old, he was sent by foot to walk to Weston to deliver a wedding gown that his mother had worked on for one month to sew. When he delivered the gown, he was given only \$15, rather than the agreed upon price of \$25. When he returned home, his mother sat in a chair and cried a long time and told him "that's just the way things are."

Joan and Harriet's maternal grandparents were born in Waltham of English Canadian descent. Joan and Harriet's mother's name was Harriet Dodge. Harriet Lally, the seventh of eight children was named after their mother. Joan was the eighth child.

When Harriet Dodge married Edward Cuniffe, her parents refused to attend their wedding because they were unhappy she was marrying an Irish Catholic man. The English were the first to settle in Waltham and were not happy when Irish Catholics started to move in, because of prejudice. People often dislike what is new and unfamiliar. In the mid 1800s, one company in Waltham shut out

¹ *The American Heritage Dictionary*, ed. William Morris (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978), p.625.

Irish workers by only hiring “native born” people.² As a young girl, Harriet can remember a friend’s mom on Summit Street asking her daughter why she couldn’t have “nice Protestant friends”.

FIRST GENERATION AMERICANS – BUILDING A STREET

Edward Cuniffe was very talented. He could sing, tap dance and play the fiddle and flute. He was also good with his hands and therefore worked as a carpenter. Joan and Harriet’s father built the first house on upper Summit Street for his family from 1918-20. There was only a dirt road when he built the house and he excavated the dirt by hand and used rocks from Prospect Hill for the foundation. His family moved in, in 1920.

Edward’s brother John was also a carpenter and with Edward’s help, built a house for himself right around the corner. While John continued to build and sell houses on Summit Street, Edward worked as a union carpenter.

One of the first houses John built for someone other than family was my house!

JOAN AND HARRIET – GROWING UP

Joan and Harriet were born in the house their father built on Summit Street. The Street looked a lot different then. The area had been an apple orchard and still had some woods and raspberry and blueberry bushes that the girls picked from. A horse wagon loaded with fresh vegetables from the nearby farm named D’Agostina’s would drive up and down Summit Street selling the goods.

Children in Waltham were not supposed to stay outdoors past 9:00pm. At 8:50pm a horn would sound that could be heard throughout the City letting kids know that they had 10 minutes to go home.

The Cuniffe family did not go out to eat given it was too expensive, but sometimes the kids would go to a little, inexpensive sandwich shop on Main Street to hang out with friends.

The main grocer in Waltham when they were young was the First National. Harriet worked as a cashier there, while Joan worked at a nearby dry cleaning store.

SCHOOL

² Kristen A. Petersen and Thomas J. Murphy, *Waltham Rediscovered* (Portsmouth, Peter E. Randall, 1988), p.148.

Joan and Harriet went to Plympton School. To begin the school day, the bell would ring and the boys and girls had to go in separate doors! At lunch time 11:30 am -1:00 pm they walked back home to eat and then would walk back to school until 3:30 pm. No girl would ever dare wear pants to school, winter or not. They would always wear skirts, and boys would wear shirts and ties.

FUN IN WALTHAM

For fun the neighborhood kids would play baseball, softball, and Kick the Can in a large field on Summit Street. On the edge of the field there was a small pond that the kids waded in. On weekends in winter there would be a barrier at the bottom of the street and a sign warning that children were playing. So Joan, Harriet and other kids would “coast” or sled down the street. Also in winter the girls would skate on little ponds on Prospect Hill that had frozen. As they got older, Joan and Harriet would rent a canoe and boat on the Charles River. Other times they would roller skate at Nuttings-on-the-Charles. Sometimes they would go to the movies. There were three theaters in Waltham then. Joan remembers many nightmares after watching King Kong.

GROWN UP

Harriet and Joan married brothers from the southside of Waltham. They were Bob and Ray Lally. Bob and Ray’s great uncle invented the Lally column in Waltham, which became the standard construction method for supporting houses. Bob and Ray Lally were both masons and built brick houses for their new families within sight of the house Joan and Harriet were born in, on Summit Street.

I started this Essay not knowing how much I could learn about my City, my neighborhood and even myself by talking to my neighbors! And though each person’s story is different there are connections that unite us.

Sources:

INTERVIEWS

Joan Lally, Summit Street, Waltham
Harriet Lally, Prospect Hill Road, Waltham

BOOKS

Melissa Mannon, *Waltham* (Charleston: Arcadia, 1998).

The American Heritage Dictionary, ed. William Morris (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978).

Kristen A. Petersen and Thomas J. Murphy, *Waltham Rediscovered* (Portsmouth, Peter E. Randall, 1988).

OTHER

Waltham Museum visit and discussions with Louise Butler and Al Arena
Charles River Museum of Industry visit and discussion with Dan Yeager

SECOND PLACE

**Heather
Higgins**

The topic of my essay is Women in Waltham, Her Story. When I began to think about topics for my essay, I decided Women in Waltham would be a very interesting subject. I chose the Waltham Junior Women's Club but when I went looking for some history, I wasn't able to find much information. I hope with my contribution through this essay, there will be a lot of information added to a file on the great services of Waltham Women.

My grandmother, Ann E. Bosworth, who passed away in 1989, several years before I was born, was a member of the Waltham Junior Women's Club and President in 1969-1970. In her collections of things from her life, I found a very large scrapbook of memorabilia from her volunteered time with the Waltham Junior Women's Club. This Club was founded in 1939 and contributed to Waltham in many ways. It was a group of young women who worked endlessly to improve the quality of life for many unfortunate people in our city. As I read through the Waltham News Tribune articles, it seemed like there wasn't a month that went by where a contribution either in money, clothes or services was given by this Club to help the less fortunate. Many donations were given through clothing, rummage sales, bake sales, cookbooks and even a Waltham High School scholarship. One of the moments that seemed highlighted in the history was the annual Pancake Festival held at the old Central Junior High School cafeteria. My own mother remembers going to that festival every year where money was raised to help with the Greater Waltham Association of Retarded Citizens (GWARC) that still operates today. Through the funds raised from this breakfast, many services were provided to these citizens. Another program called the Community Improvement Program helped

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provide donated carriages and wheelchairs to the Walter E. Fernald School so that children who could not walk were able to get out of their beds and cribs to get fresh air.

The Waltham Women's Club motto was, "Today not Tomorrow" and was so true of their never ending kindness and generosity to make sure people were helped and cared for.

From this group another star was born called The Waltham Juniores, later called the Lamplighters. This group consisted of members from the Waltham Junior Women's Club that were able to put their voices together to sing at charity events throughout the year. These were all young women with very young children who donated their time for the good of bringing happiness to people. Every year this singing group would perform their Christmas Show at Grover Cronin's department store to the thrill of huge crowds of people. They would also sing at the Waltham Hospital every Christmas and all of the proceeds from their singing events were donated for scholarships in the music or performing arts to a Waltham High School graduate.

From the information available in her old scrapbook, she and all of the women in the organization achieved a lot of success in helping other people. From my essay research, I will contribute many copies from my grandmother's scrapbook to both the Waltham Public Library and The Waltham Museum. I would like to make sure that the legacy of The Waltham Junior Women's Club and my grandmother and any available history from that time be started on The Waltham Junior Women's Club and The Lamplighters in the history of Women in Waltham, Her Story.

THIRD PLACE

Connor Fay

I want to thank the following people for their time and for providing me with the information I used in my essay.

Al Arena
The Waltham Museum

Louise Butler
The Waltham Museum

Dianne Hudson
Stonehurst, The Robert Treat Paine Estate

Jen Meader
Stonehurst, The Robert Treat Paine Estate

I was excited to write an essay about “Waltham’s History – The Nation’s History.” As I thought about what to write, I wondered about what kids played growing up in Waltham in the past. I wanted to know if they liked the same things as me or if they liked to do different things.

I went to Stonehurst – The Robert Treat Paine Estate. I met with Jennifer Meader and Dianne Hudson. They each taught me about the Paine children and the things they did when they came to their summer house in Waltham in the late 1800’s. Lily and George were the youngest of the five Paine children. The workers at the Paine Estate know the most about what Lily and George did when they came to Waltham as children. I learned that George liked to play in the woods and collect birds’ eggs. He also liked to play the game croquet. Lily liked to collect flowers and press them in her diary. She also always had a pet dog. The children read a lot of books. One of the books Lily read was “The Fairy Book.” This book was a collection of stories including Cinderella, Little Red-Riding-Hood, Puss in Boots, The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood, Beauty and the Beast, Jack the Giant Killer and more. George and Lily liked to play with their cousins that lived nearby. Jen showed me the children’s playroom. The playroom is on the third floor and is now used as an attic. The playroom was near the servants’ quarters. Dianne showed me the back of the door where the height of each child, and even some of Lily’s dogs, was recorded each summer.

I went to The Waltham Museum to see what else I could learn about how kids played. There I met Louise Butler and Al Arena. Mrs. Butler showed me a collection of Indian arrowheads that children used to dig up and find on Prospect Hill. She also told me that chalk was invented in Waltham by Dr. Francis Fields. Chalk was used for work and school then – but now we use it for play! Mrs. Butler also showed me a train that was Mayor McCarthy’s when she was a little girl. I spoke with Mr. Arena about growing up in Waltham in the 1930’s. He said he and his friends played games like jump rope, hide and seek, red rover, Simon says, red light/ green light, Mother, may I?, hit the can and kick the can. They also played games with marbles that they called “aggies”. They used “aggies” to play the games bunny hole, pops and triangle. They had competitions doing tricks with yo-yos. Mr. Arena said they also liked to go ice skating and roller skating. They made their own scooters out of wooden boxes and roller skate wheels. Mrs. Butler said that she liked to play tag and hopscotch.

Growing up in the 2000’s, I like to use the computer, play video games and watch TV and movies. But, I also like to do some of the same things that the Paine children, Mr. Arena and Mrs. Butler did too. I like to hike in the woods around the Paine Estate. In fact, on the day I visited the Paine Estate, I hiked in the woods with my family to find the abandoned tennis court. We got lost for a little while, but we saw two vernal pools, met other people and their dogs and had fun. Like the Paine children, I like to play with my cousins. I also like to play a lot of the same games as Mr. Arena and Mrs. Butler played when they were kids like hide and seek, Simon says, hopscotch and tag. I also like to use chalk to draw pictures on my driveway.

When I went to The Waltham Museum and the Paine Estate, I discovered that a lot of the things I like to do today, kids have always liked. I also had a lot of fun learning about the kids of Waltham’s past. I wonder what I’ll learn and write about next year.

HONORABLE MENTION

**Donatella
Carazo**

May fifteenth of 1809

My Dear cousin and friend Catherine,
I hope you feel good on this fine day. My trip to England was great. I am inviting you and your family on June fifth at 9:00 in the morning at my summer house in Waltham. I am having a breakfast party because my husband Christopher was elected governor of Massachusetts. This is such an important event that we don't want you to miss it. I already arranged to have over twenty servants. Nabby, my personal maid, will help us with the children. We will serve the food in the oval room. We will have eggs, ham, turkey, bread and butter, and tea. All this food came from our farm and garden. We will have ice for our ice tea. I requested ten ice blocks from the icehouse.

After the breakfast, the ladies will leave the oval room to the next room and hear me play the harp and have a cup of tea from China. While we have a cup of tea we can talk about all your children, our friends, and we can talk about the new silk dresses that they are making in Boston and New York. After we will play my favorite card game, Loo.

Mister Gore and I love living on this peaceful farm. Our apple trees have a lot of apples this year. Our farmers are growing

crops. The foods that they are growing are lettuce, tomato, peas, corn, carrots, potatoes, peppers, and cabbages. Finally we are having a great time with the farm and garden business. Christopher had a new idea of making dresses out of cotton. For that idea he met with Mister Nathan Appleton last week, and they have a plan to open a cotton factory here in Waltham, in the next five years. When they were working, Mister Appleton's butler, Mister Robert Roberts came over to ask me if I needed anything, I liked how he treated me. He seems to know what he is doing. He is someone I would hire to help me at home.

When the tailors finish my dress I will wear my finest pearl jewelry and fur scarf that I have and I will show the dress to you. I picked for Mister Gore a silk plum suit with hand made flowers embroidered. This is the latest fashion in England. I will ask Mister Trumbull to paint a second painting of me with this gown. I put my first painting next to the spiral stairs in the entrance of my house. All the Harvard students love our paintings. They walk seven miles every week from Cambridge to read our books from our library, play billiard, and talk to Mister Gore. We like their company so much that we invite them for dinner every Sunday. Our carriage takes them home every night. I hope you can stay with us until my birthday on August twenty fifth. I hope you can come to the party. I can't wait to hear your daughter Mary-Ann play the harp.

Your friend always,
Rebecca Gore

