

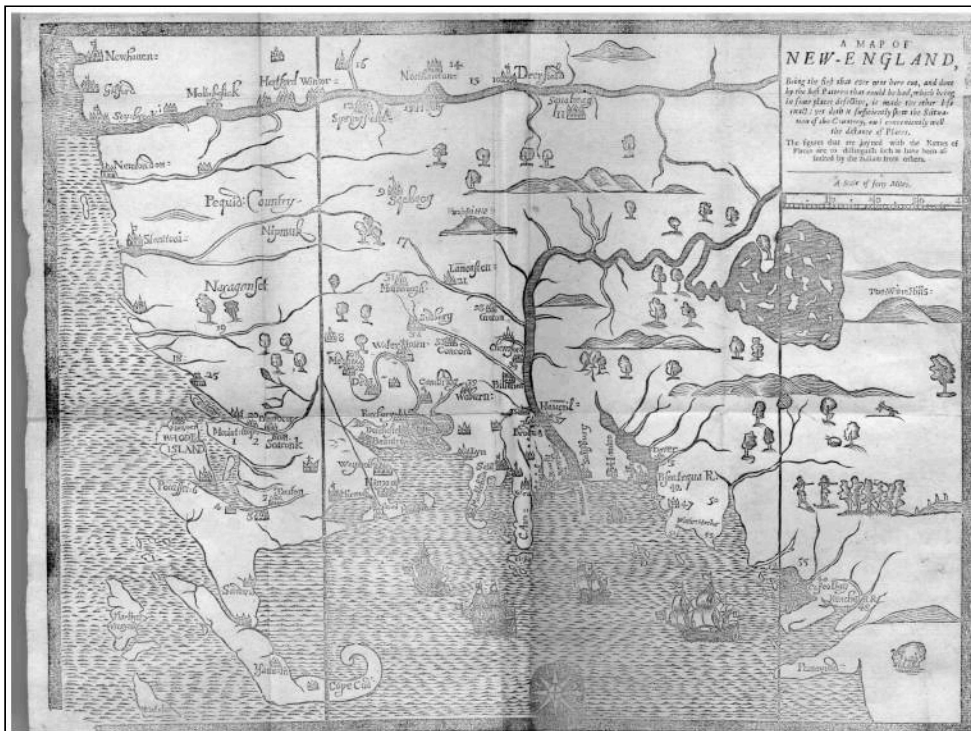
A History of
Wenham
As Seen
Through Maps
From 1644 to 2012

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Jack E. Hauck



New England in 1600s. West is at the top and east at the bottom. Cape Cod, lower left, and Rhode Island are shown as an island. Map John Foster Woodcut Print 1670.

History of Wenham As Seen Through Maps

Valuable tools in searching out history are old maps. Especially helpful are those few maps that show where people lived and certain events took place.

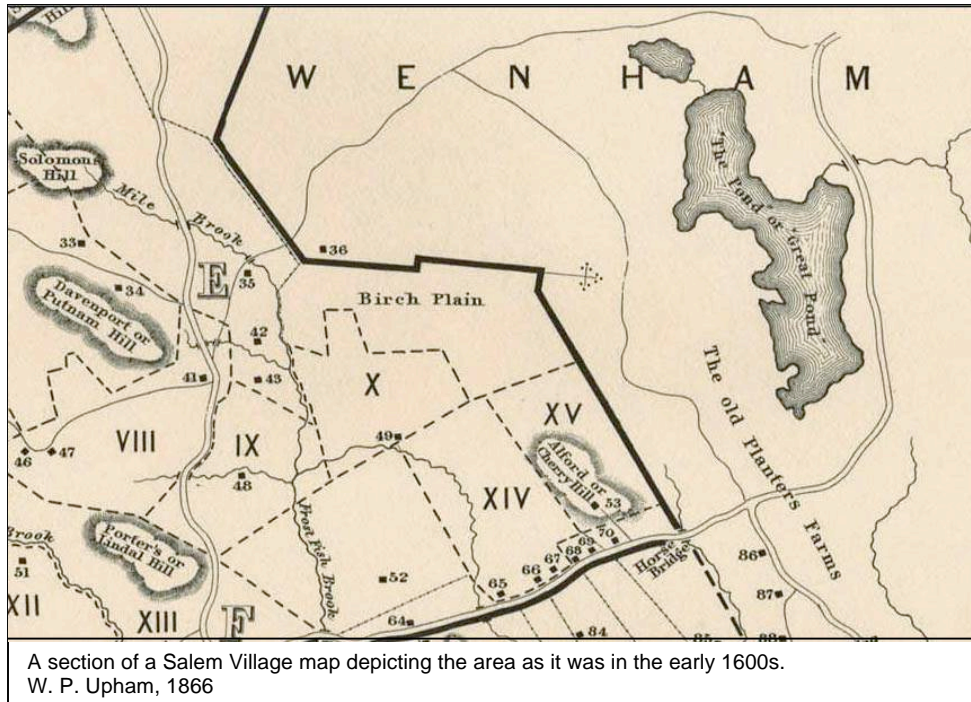
Most old maps are rough sketches of an area. The map drawers were not cartographers. While roughly drawn they are better guides than written descriptions that referred to trees, boulders, fences and brooks.

The map above, originally drawn by John Foster in 1670, is a print made from a woodcut.

Of note are: Salem Village; Cape Ann; Marblehead; and Wenham.

Foster's woodcut, Map of New-England, is the first ever made in the Colony. The map was in William Hubbard's *The present State of New-England, being a Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians*, which was printed and published by Foster, in Boston in 1677.

At the time, the map was the most advanced view of southern New England. The vertical lines indicate the northern and southern boundaries of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The numbers by the towns refer to those towns that were affected by the Indians during King Philip's War.



Salem Village

Drawn in 1866, by William Phineas Upham, a map of the properties of various Salem Village landowners also shows the southern portion of Wenham around Wenham Lake. The preceding map appears to have been based on this map.

Three unnamed roads are shown coming out of Salem Village into Wenham.

The road passing on the east side of Wenham Lake was called the Country Road or the Road to Wenham.

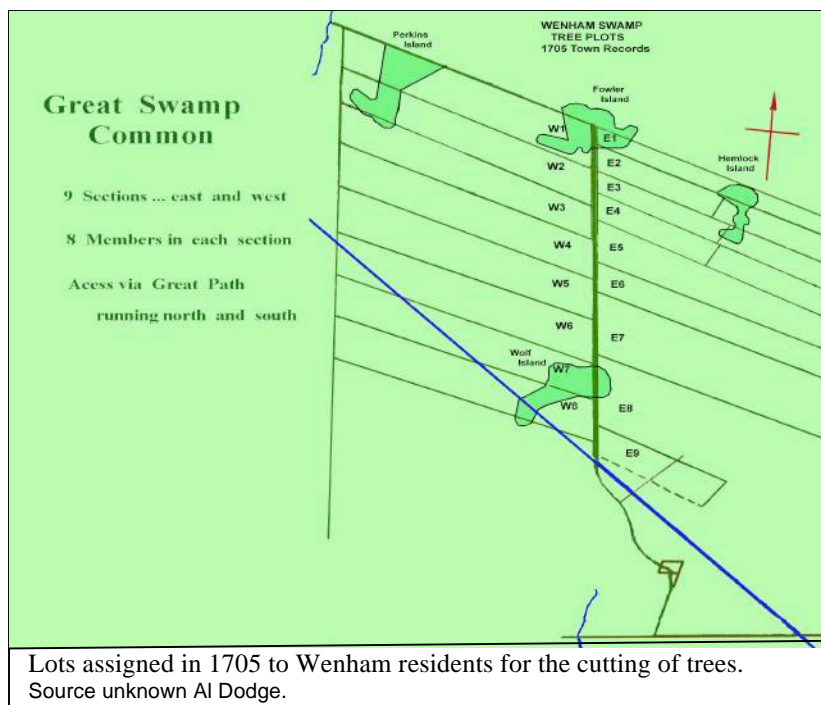
The road passing on the west side of Wenham Lake was called Trask Road.

The road traversing on the north of Wenham Lake was called the Way to Salem Village.

Upham labeled Wenham Lake as "The Pond or Great Pond."

in 1649, under the General Laws and Liberties of the Bay Colony, a "Great Pond" was defined as any pond over 10 acres. It was legal for any man to pass over another's land in order to reach a Great Pond, to fish or fowl, so long as "they trespass not on any man's corn or meadow."

The Old Planters' Farms was a 1,000-acre grant from the Massachusetts Bay Company, in 1630.



Town common in Great Swamp

Initially, the Great Swamp was considered to be common land, which all people could access for farming, grazing for their live stock and collecting timber and fire wood. However, as the 18th century began, the town government decided that the Great Swamp should be divided among designated groups of the town's people. There had been many arguments about who could take wood from the Great Swamp.

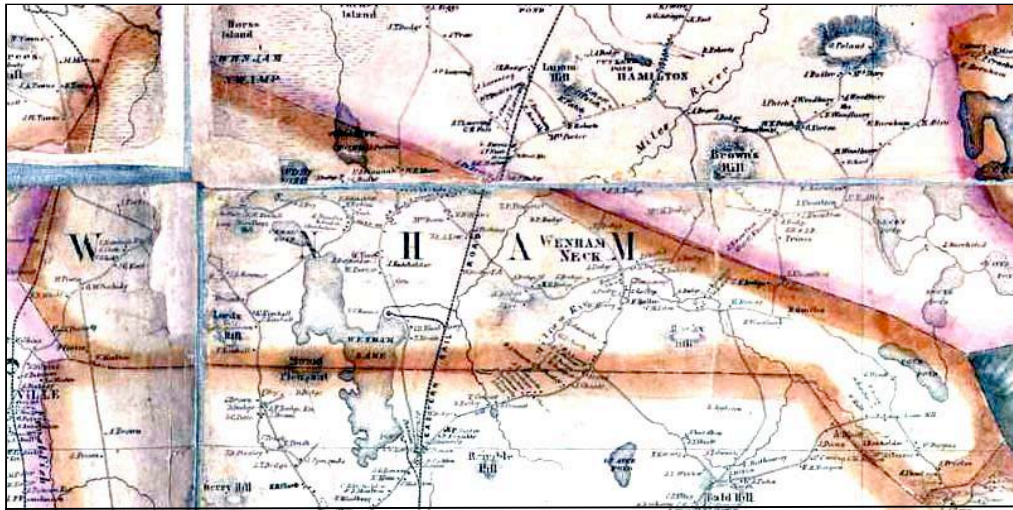
The selectmen divided the swamp into nine sections, most being each 50 ft. wide and 200 ft. long. Groups, called companies, with 8 owners in each, were formed. This was done Nov. 18, 1705.

Wood removal began by cutting from the front off the center path, the Great Path, and working back. It was thought that by time the back was reached, new trees would have grown at the front and the cutting would begin again from the front. This was a very optimistic program, since large trees were cut down faster than planted trees grew to equal sizes. The center road was called the Great Path.

In 1705, there was not a map. The lots were described in town records, indicating marked trees and boulders.

The blue line is the Salem-Beverly Water Supply Board canal that was made in 1917.

The upper boundary was the Wenham-Ipswich town line.



Few 1856 Massachusetts maps, printed in color on paper, adhered to linen-cloth, still exist. Folding of the old maps caused the paper to crack and fall from the cloth backing. Henry F. Walling, 1856

1856 Walling

Along with the map showing houses in the town center, Walling created a map of the entire town that showed where people lived, the main roads and location of notable structures. Smith and Morely of Boston published the map.

The Wenham section was part of a 63 x 63-in. wall-map of Essex county that was adhered to linen cloth backing. Unfortunately, existing copies are marred along areas where the map was folded for storage.

There are many notable items on the map:

Dots on the map indicate where there were houses. Not all are identified as to the owner.

The Steam Mill in East Wenham, owned by Henry Dodge, was used to saw wood.

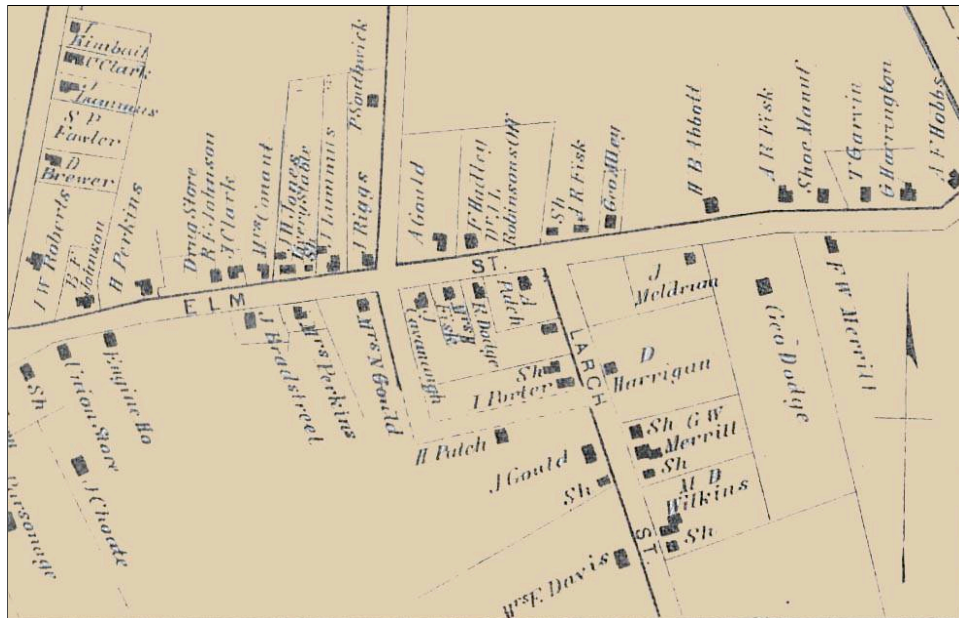
The few number of houses along the south end of Country Road (*now Main Street*).

The first house of Dodges Row was owned by David P. Lefavour.

The Baptist Church in the Neck is shown for the first time on a Wenham map. The church was formed in 1831.

Two roads are shown off of Cherry Street. The first one, exiting on the north side of the road, likely was Old Town Way; and the second one, exiting on the north side of the road, likely was Porter Lane.

The road exiting off of Topsfield Road, north of Cedar Street and before Cherry Street, cannot be identified.



A section of an 1872 map shows many changes in property owners from 1856.
1872 Atlas of Essex County, plate 95, D. G. Beers

1872 Beers

The 1872 Atlas of Essex County has a map of Wenham, plate 95, produced by D. G. Beers shows properties and owners.

Of note, in this view, are:

Blank property at corner of Elm and Larch. It was the Parsonage property.

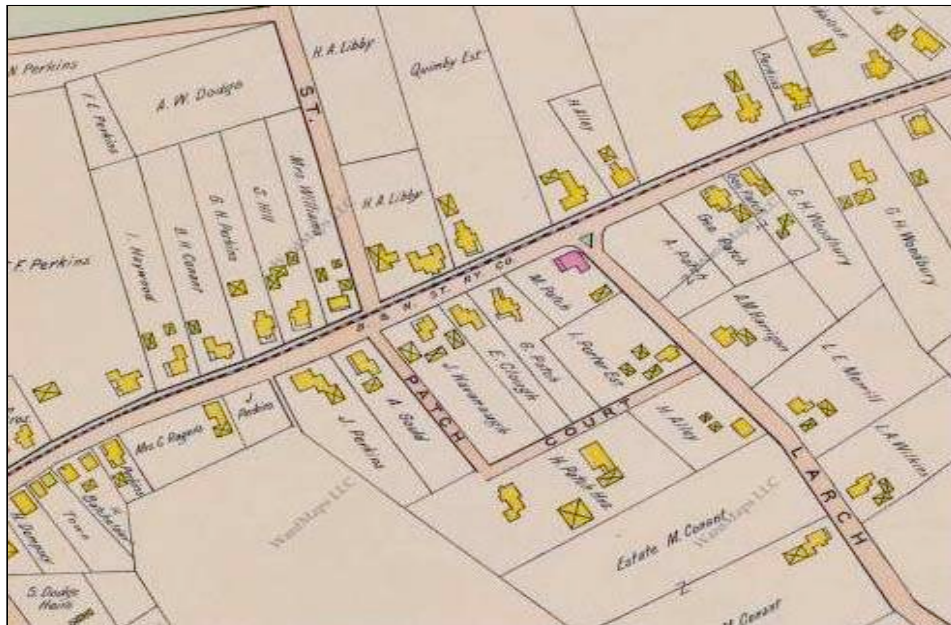
Union Store that was built in 1870. Built by the Wenham Cooperative Union, the Union Block Building was an early version of we now call a shopping mall. It was started by Dr. John L. Robinson, for "the purpose of cooperative trade, in carrying on the business of a country store."

Jerry Choate's shop, at first, a wagon and carriage paint shop, later became his house. Today, the building, owned and operated by Elissa (Scott) Della-Piana as a studio for displaying fine art and illustrations of international artists, is located behind 154 Main, the Lekkakos Salon.

The drug store, owned and run by Benjamin Johnson, later was relocated to 145 Main.

The I. W. Roberts lot that originally was the site of Wenham's first tavern and later became the car-barn lot for the Naumkeag Street Railway Company, of Salem.

The A. R. Fiske shoe business made shoes for the civil war. Fire destroyed the shoe factory Jan. 10, 1878. Wind-blown cinders also set the house on fire.



Section of the 1910 map printed by Walker Lithograph & Publishing Co.

1910 Walker

About 40 years later, Walker Lithograph & Publishing Co., of Boston, produced a map similar to the 1972 Beers map.

Many of the properties shown on the Beers map had new owners. Also, the land north of Larch Row had houses for the first time. The 1910 Walker map shows more clearly the size of the individual properties.

This is the first map to show the streetcar rail line running through Wenham, along Main St.

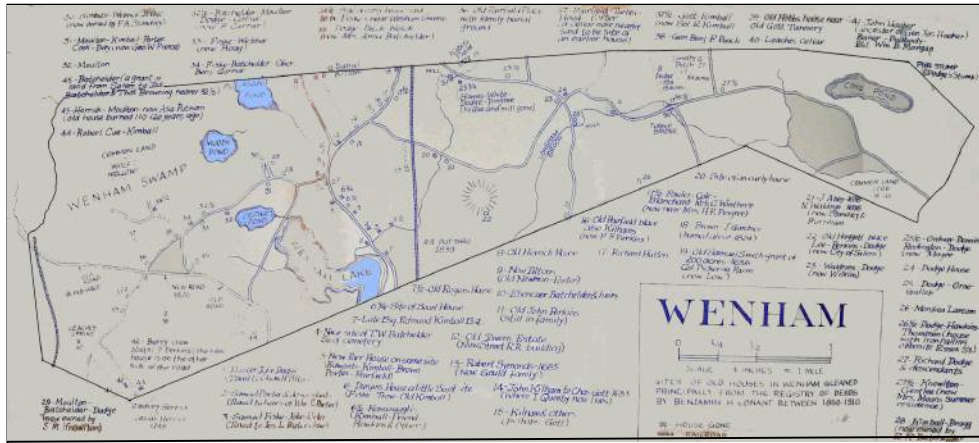
Of special note are the barns behind many of the houses. Few of these barns now remain.

On Larch Row, there is the Henry Alley house. He was quite well known for raising queen bees. He started the "Bay State Apiary." In 1885, he wrote beekeeper's handbook.

The road off of Perkins St. is the new School St., created when the Center School opened in 1907.

There are seven properties, in this section, that were owned by different Perkins families, two of which were very large.

The lot at the corner of Main and Larch, vacant in the 1884 Walker map, was still vacant in the 1910 map, but was owned by Austin Patch. A few years later, Elbridge Anderson built a house on the lot for his daughter Mary Luscomb.



Map of oldest houses, as well as other structures, in Wenham , all of which the author photographed. 1890 Benjamin H. Conant

1890-1910 Conant

Benjamin H. Conant created a map showing where families lived. As he wrote on the map, the information was “gleaned from the registry of deeds between 1890 and 1910.

Much of the information is unique to this map. For example:

#: 26 ½, *Dodge/Hawkins/Thomson house*, the house with the iron railing;

#41, *John Hooker house*: He was an ancestor to Gen. Joseph Hooker, who defeated Gen, Robert E. Lee, at the Battle of Chancellorsville, in 1863.

#22, *Old Haggett place*; Henry Haggett was one of the earliest settlers in Wenham, 1657.

#3, *Samuel Fiske house*. The grandson of Rev. John Fiske, he was a constable in 1688. It was the second bloodiest day of the Civil War.

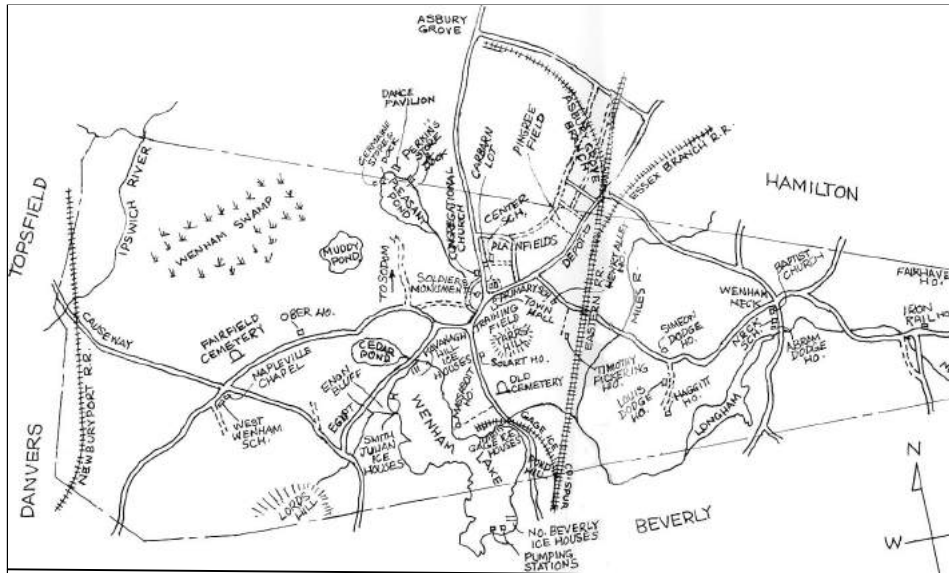
#38, *Gen. Benjamin F. Peach house*: He entered the Union army in 1861 as a 1st Sergeant. In 1863, was colonel of 8th Mass. Regt. In 1864, became a general at the age of 25.

The new and old routes of Topsfield Rd.: Coming from Beverly, the old Topsfield Rd., then called Trask St. in this section, intersected Flint St. that led to Cherry St. that turned back to the old Topsfield Rd., then called Bomer Rd. The new section, connecting Trask and Bomer was created in 1922.

Also note *the roads off of Cherry Street*. One most likely is an early stage of Pleasant St. The other is unknown.

The Turnip Bridge in the Neck was on Grapevine Rd., in the Turnip Swamp area, and crossed the Miles River.

The Common Land in East Wenham: This later would be called Little Comfort. Comfort Preston lived here. Her daughter was very popular with the boys, and they talked of going over to Little Comfort's.



For the book *Wenham in Pictures and Prose*, Harold W. Boothroyd created a map showing the location of Wenham's many historic sites.

Town common

Harold Boothroyd, who did a great amount of research on Wenham's history, drew a map showing the location of many historic sites in the town.

Of special note are:

Mapleville Baptist Chapel: On the corner of Maple Street and Topsfield Road, it was moved, in 1947, to School St. It now is the Wenham Senior Center.

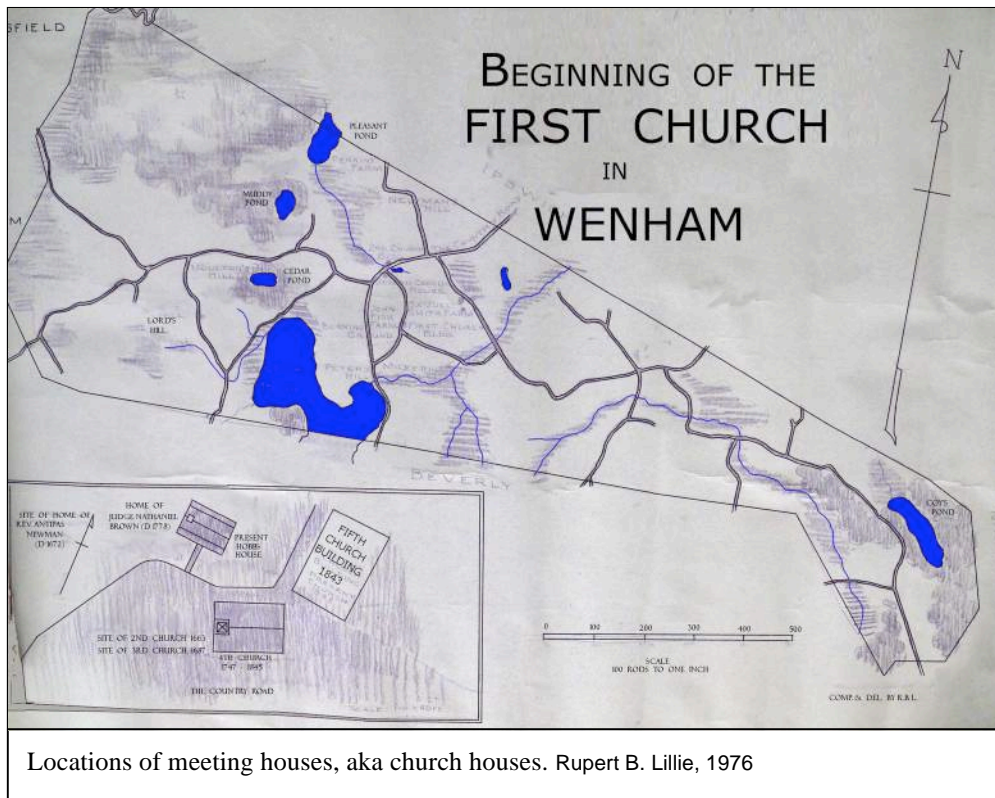
Gage railroad spur: Running from Wenham Lake to the Eastern railroad line, it was created when Peter's Hill was leveled in 1844.

Eastern railroad spur: Running from the Wenham Depot out to Asbury Grove, it was created in 1844, and lasted until 1873. Competition from streetcars led to its end.

Little Egypt: In 1816, known to historians as the "year without a summer," snow fell all across new England, in June and July, killing most of the corn. The following spring, a Wenham farmer was about the only one that had corn for seed; farmers went to his farm to buy corn; thus the name Egypt, a reference to the Bible story of Joseph, in Egypt.

Longham reservoir: Created in 1895 from land acquired by eminent domain, in order to dam the Miles River, thus forming the reservoir, it was necessary to demolish or move several homes in the area.

The road to Sodom: An area of Pleasant Street, it may have been named for some sinful activities known to happen there.



Locations of meeting houses, aka church houses. Rupert B. Lillie, 1976

First meeting house

This map, which comes from the First Church history library, was drawn by Rupert B. Lillie, around 1975.

There are several interesting items shown on the map:

Location of the "First Church Building," on a road that once was to the east of the "Country Road."

This road, running from Wenham Lake behind the burial ground, to the 2nd church building, was the original route of the Salem to Ipswich highway (*now Main St., in Wenham*).

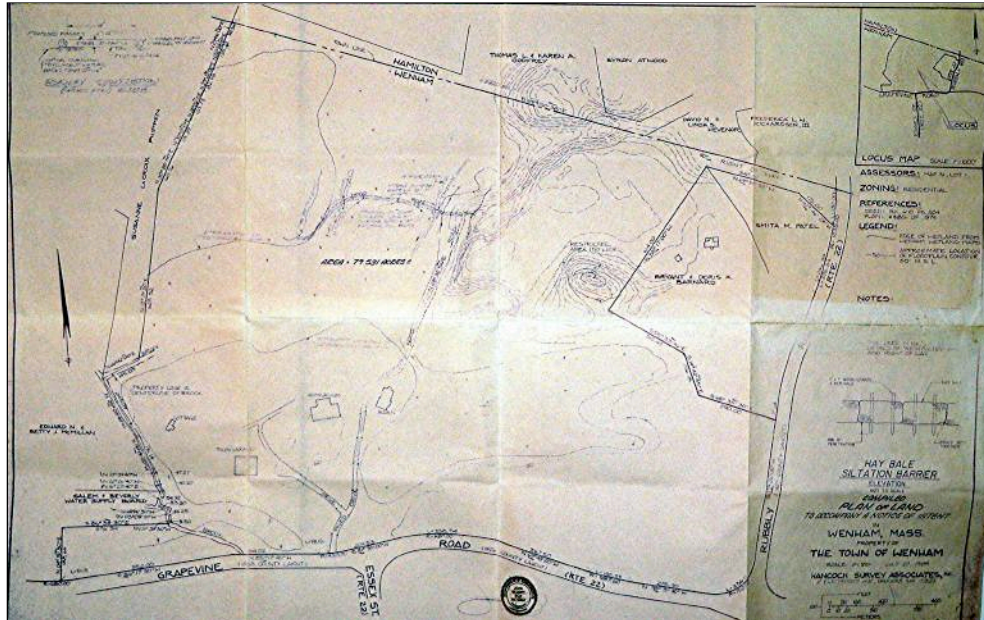
The road going east from this road to Larch Row likely is in error.

In the insert, the way alongside the 5th Church was a right-of-way created when Austin Killam traded some of his land to the town for building the 2nd meetinghouse.

The old route of Topsfield Rd., previously reviewed in the 1890-1910 Conant map.

Miles River is an error: this is Alewife Brook.

The insert shows the location of Rev. Antipas Newman, the 2nd church pastor.



Dodge Iron Rail property was acquired by Wenham in 1974.
Hancock Survey Associates

1979 Iron Rail Property

Wenham acquired the Iron Rail Vacation Home property in 1974 from Iron Rail Fund of the Girls Clubs of America.

The map, drawn in 1979. Provides specific boundaries for the property and its topography.

The cottage was one many that once were on the property and where vacationing girls roomed.

The barn, in 1910, was modified to be a gymnasium. After the property was acquired by town, Boy Scout Troop 28 began holding regular Monday evening meetings and other activities, in the refurbished barn/gymnasium.

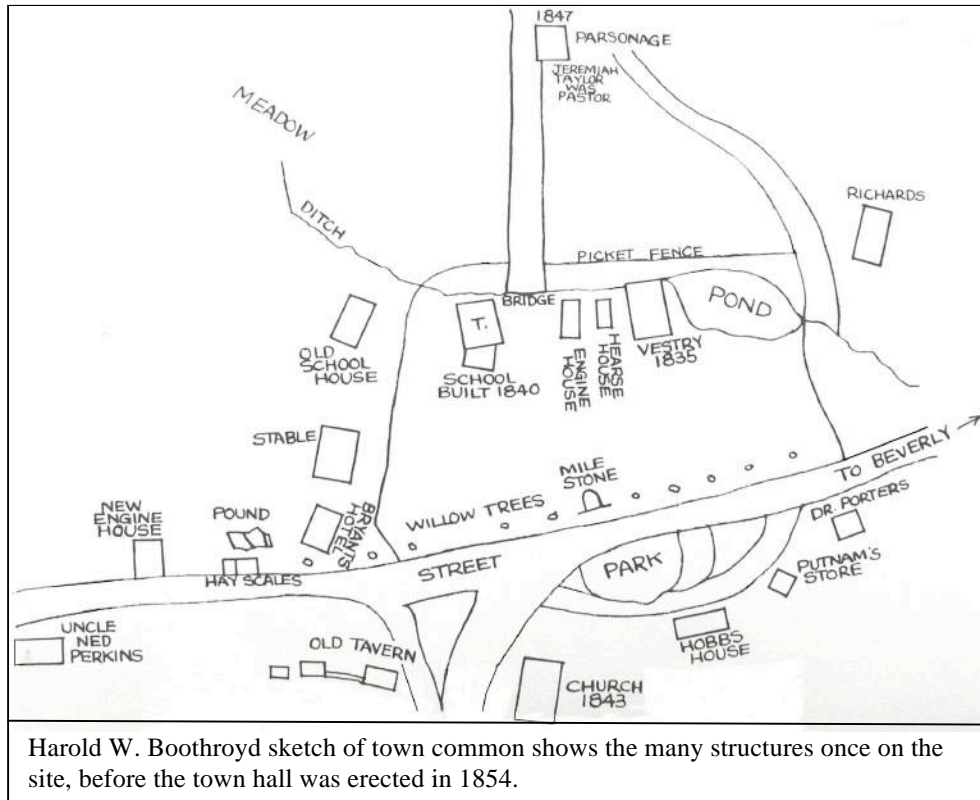
Town garage houses Wenham's Highway Department headquarters and main garage.

Gymnasium, built in 1941, is a large, brick auditorium and gymnasium, equipped with a library, kitchen and dormitory.

Previously, the large barn on the property had been modified to be a gymnasium. However, in 1941 a new brick gymnasium, with additional rooms and a library was built.¹⁹

The brook, while not identified, is Dishwater Brook.

Right of way leads to the Iron Rail Cemetery that was opened in 2006. The first burial, at the site, was that of Joseph Lovejoy.



Wenham Common

For the book, *Wenham in Pictures and Prose*, published in 1992, Harold W Boothroyd, drew this map of the town common in the center of the town, before the town hall was built in 1854.

Drawing from his many years of researching Wenham's history, Boothroyd showed, for the first time, where the many buildings were on the common.

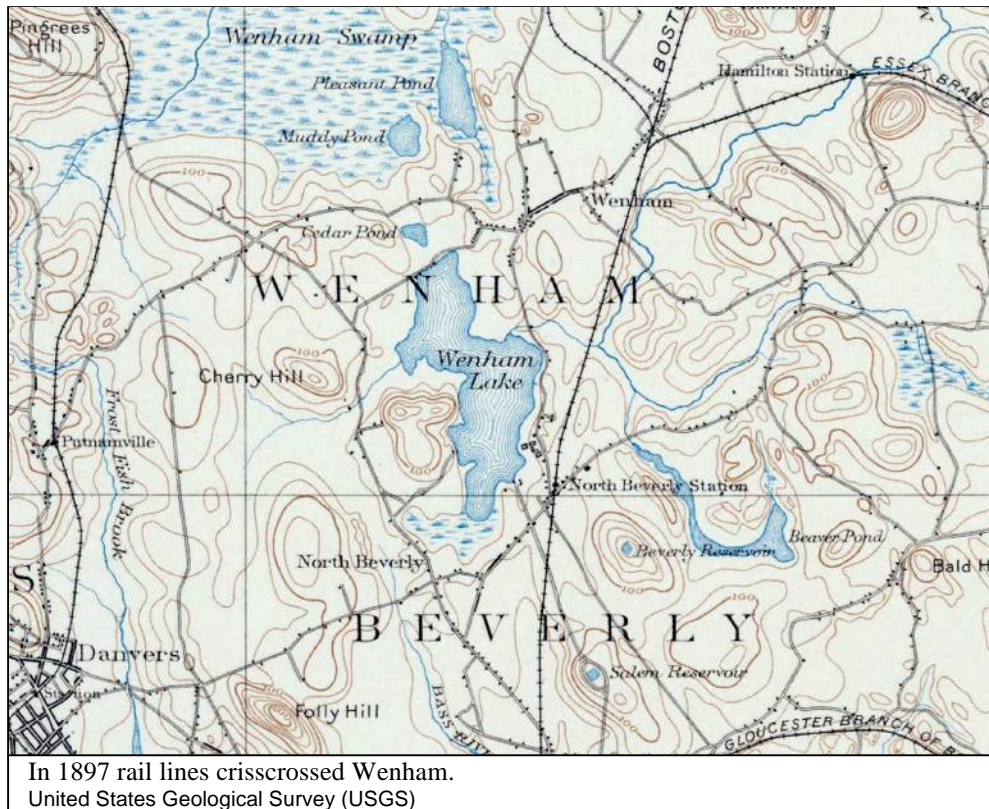
Of special note on this sketch are:

The hay scales were moved to the location shown when the Civil War Monument was erected in 1878. They had been on the path behind the monument.

The old tavern is shown to have consisted of two buildings connected by a covered walkway. This is the only reference to the tavern's layout.

The road to the parsonage was necessary because the parsonage lot was landlocked. Apparently, a shown by the bridge over the ditch leading to the pond, there also was a walkway across the common

Uncle Ned Perkins's house, likely refers to Nathaniel Perkins, who once lived at what is now 149 Main St.



1897 Rail lines

By the late 19th century, Wenham was served by two major rail lines and two small branches.

The main line, at the time, was owned by the Eastern Railroad. The Eastern was chartered in 1836; opened to Salem in 1838; to Ipswich in 1839 and to Portsmouth, N. H., in 1840.

The Essex Branch, from Wenham Depot, ran about 5.5 miles to Essex.

Asbury Grove Branch, from Wenham Depot, ran a short distance to Asbury Grove.

On the west side of the town, there was the Newburyport Railroad. In 1849, it opened from Newburyport on the Eastern Railroad to Georgetown.

The Danvers and Georgetown Railroad opened in 1853, running from the Newburyport Railroad at Georgetown south to Danvers on the Essex Branch Railroad.

The first two companies merged in 1855 to form a new Newburyport Railroad. The B&M leased the Danvers Railroad in 1853, and the combined Newburyport Railroad in 1860, making the line from Wakefield to Newburyport the main line.

Wenham Lake

Drawn by the renowned cartographer, Dr. Erwin Raisz, in 1927, the map of Wenham Lake shows surrounding terrain and various sites around the lake.

Of particular note are:

Israel's shore: This was the area off of Cedar St. once owned by Israel Batchelder.

Butler's Island: When the water level in the lake was much lower, there was an island named for Benjamin Butler, Massachusetts governor in 1882, and who ran for U. S. presidency in 1884.

The Peninsula: Once an island or near-island, it became a peninsula when John C. Phillips filled soil in, about 1881.

Thirty-acre Brook: Once was a small stream coming from the Lord's Hill area and emptying into Dodge's Cove.

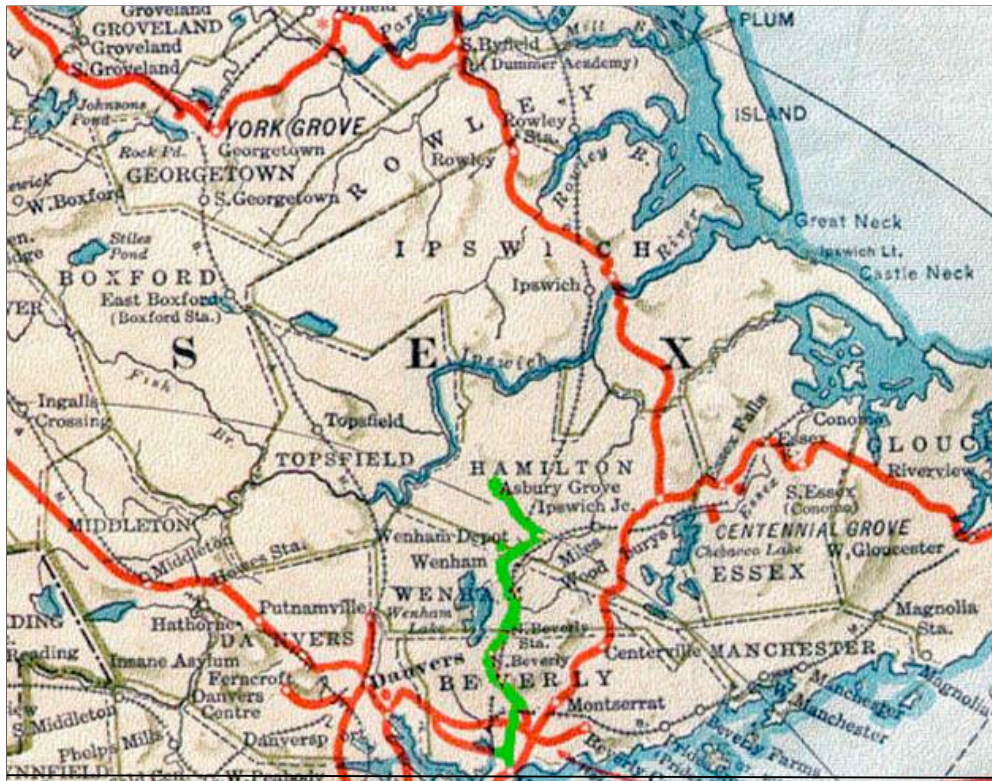
Windy Knob: the home of Dr. John C. Phillips. In his memory, there now is a memorial boulder, with a plaque, at the north end of the lake, on Cedar Street.

Prospect Hill: William Phillips, John's brother, who gave the memorial address at the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the Town of Wenham, built a home on Prospect Hill, overlooking the lake. Fire destroyed both homes.

Old canal: Around 1880, a canal – more accurately, a ditch – was dug to drain Cedar Pond and the surrounding area (*about 20 acres, in all*) into the lake.

Filter Beds: Originally, Wenham Lake's water originally was crystal clear. However, when the lake became a reservoir serving the greater Salem area, additional water from surrounding areas was fed into the lake. Filtering beds had to be made and, later, a water purification plant built.





A section of 1910 trolley map. The green line shows the route from Salem bridge, through Wenham, to Asbury Grove, in Hamilton. Tri-State Trolley Map, 1910

1910 Streetcar routes

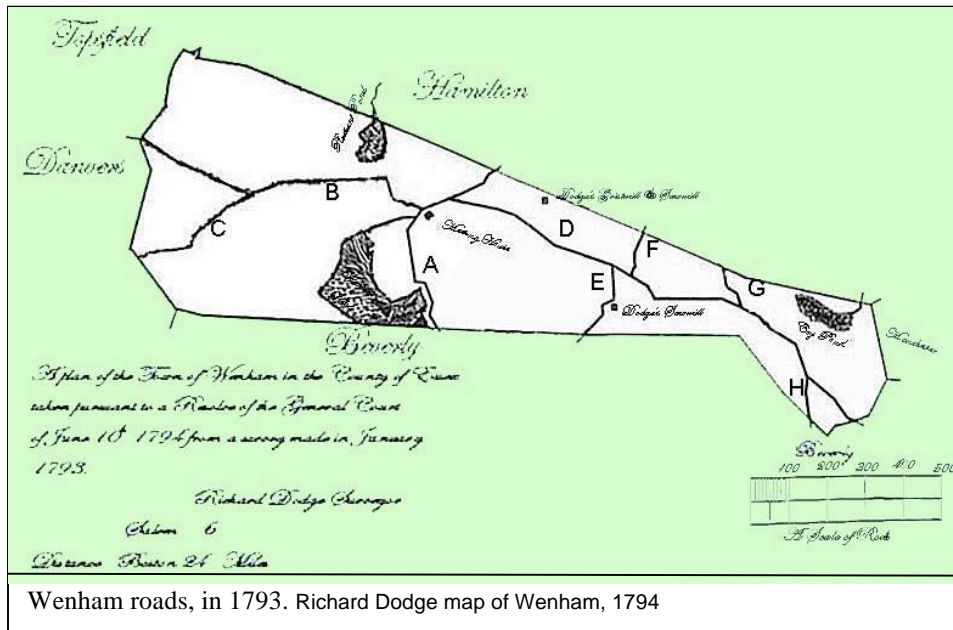
In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Massachusetts was covered with streetcar routes. It was possible to go by trolley (*electric-powered cars*) as far north as Newburyport.

The line, in green, running from Beverly to Asbury Grove lasted until 1930. The schedule listed the travel distance as 7.5 miles, which took 40 minutes, and the fare was 10¢.

Asbury Grove, a Methodist camp ground, was listed as one of the “most attractive” “pleasure places,” to which people could take the trolley. It was said to have ball grounds, a grocery, bakery, restaurant, various amusements, and rooms to let, for only \$5/night.

Most people using the Asbury extension went through the Methodist camp grounds at the Grove in order to get to Pleasant Pond, for boating, fishing, dancing, swimming and partying.

Beverly was the hub for routes leading east to Gloucester and Rockport; north to Newburyport and Haverhill; northwest to North Andover; and south to Boston.



Wenham roads, in 1793. Richard Dodge map of Wenham, 1794

1793 Roads

A very basic map, drawn by Richard Dodge, in 1794, shows the roads in Wenham. However, Dodge did not label the roads.

The roads were:

- A - Salem to Ipswich Highway, created in 1644;
- B - The Way to the Great Meadows, created around 1658;
- C – Burley St., created in 1705;
- D - The Way to East End, created in 1687;
- E – Rubbly Rd., created well before 1776;
- F – Maple St., created well before 1776;
- G – An unknown road, not shown on any other maps.
- H – Hull St., created well before 1776.

Missing from this map are many streets created before 1794, including: Boulder Ln., The Highway, Way to Pleasant Pond, The Great Path, and The King's Highway. There were houses on all these roads.

Updated 06-01-2014

References

Wenham Great Pond, John C. Philips, Salem-Peabody Museum, 1928. Notes on Wenham History, 1643 – 1943, Compiled by Adeline P. Cole, Edited and Published by the Wenham Historical Association

Wenham in Pictures & Prose, 1643-1993, Published by the Wenham Historical Association & Museum, Inc., 1992.