



Newton Lower Falls IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

LOWDOWN SPRING 2024

From the LFIA President's Desk

by Shelah Feiss/stfeiss@gmail.com

Happy Spring from the LFIA! I hope to see you all at our **Spring meeting on April 28, 3:00pm**, at the Community Center. *Babysitting will be provided (see below).*

On behalf of the LFIA, I want to thank you for all of your contributions to our neighborhood. Whether you donated funds, volunteered to help clean and mulch the garden beds and fields, coordinated an event, hosted or participated in the Progressive Dinner or the family-friendly appetizer event, enjoyed movie night, or came to an LFIA Board meeting, **WE APPRECIATE YOU!!**

The LFIA is here only **because of** and **for you!** If you have questions about neighborhood issues, ideas for events you'd like to see, if you're curious about what we do at our Board meetings, we welcome you. We are eager for your input!

Here is a list of the board members and their roles. Please reach out to any of us with your ideas, questions, and concerns.

- Ted Chapman, Treasurer
- Becky Connor, At Large member
- Nancy Finn, Membership Chair
- Barbara Gruenthal, Riverside Liaison
- Cyrisse Jaffee, Civics Co-Chair
- Erin Kandamar, Past President
- Kathy Kasabula, Recording Secretary
- Michael Lorant, Communications Chair
- Elizabeth Mirabile, Riverside Liaison
- Suzanne Pond, Beautification Chair
- Keerthi Sadananda, At Large member
- Becky Shelton, At Large member
- Drew Williams, At Large member

LFIA COMMUNITY MEETING

SUNDAY, APRIL 28, 2024

3PM-5PM COMMUNITY CENTER

Agenda

- Welcome
- Approval of Minutes (Fall 2023)
- Community Events: Upcoming
- Beautifying Our Neighborhood
- Riverside Update
- Membership: How to join or renew
- Treasurer's Report

Babysitting will be available!

Event Round-Up

Here's a recap of what's been going on and what's coming up:

- ◆ The modified Progressive Dinner in November was a great success. **Marta Kuperwasser** and **Michael Lorant** coordinated the event, with numerous hosts serving delicious appetizers, drinks, and desserts in a relaxed atmosphere.
- ◆ The LFIA hosted a fun, family-friendly New Year's Day Open House at the Community Center. The Boston ILL-Harmonic (a band including neighbors **Michael Lorant, Sal Falzone, Sheila Doyle**) played Beatles music, **Drew Williams** set up games for the kids in the gym, and we had hot chocolate and baked goodies provided by Dunkin' and wonderful neighbors. We will definitely add this to our annual activities!
- ◆ The LFIA will sponsor a band and set up kid-related activities during **Porch Fest on June 12**. We'll be at the Community Center from 10:00am-2:00pm that day. *Watch the listserv for more info.*
- ◆ Summer Movie Night is coming, date TBD. Stay posted—and send us your suggestions for what we should watch.
- ◆ The family-friendly appetizer get-together will return in September.

Neighbors Teaching Neighbors: We Want You!

Are you an avid gardener, musician, carpenter, teacher, foodie, chef, doctor, lawyer, artist, electrician, computer “geek,” movie maven, actor or producer, or have any other teachable skill?

Would you be willing to share your knowledge for an hour or two with interested neighbors?

We would like to set up sessions for you to share your knowledge, skills, and expertise. (Several people have already volunteered to hold classes on gardening and cooking.) **If you are willing to share your talents, please email me at stfeiss@gmail.com.**

Lower Falls Lowdown News

If you are reading this, then you are reading the *Lower Falls Lowdown*. **Summer Zeh**, who has been putting together the Lowdown for many years, has stepped aside temporarily. **Michael Lorant, Keerthi Sadananda, and Cyrisse Jaffee** were the editors for this Spring issue.

The *Lowdown* keeps us up to date about the people and issues in our neighborhood, and it's always fun to read. If you know anyone that needs a print copy, let me know and we'll make sure they get one.

BABYSITTERS NEEDED!

We will offer babysitting during our Spring meeting on April 28 at 3:00pm. If you are a teen or parent who would be willing to help out, please email me at stfeiss@gmail.com. We will be happy to reimburse you.

GOT LISTSERV QUESTIONS? READ ON

by Michael Lorant (your friendly listserv manager)

Lots of people ask me if their message to the listserv went through. **Messages that you send to the listserv will not automatically appear in**

your inbox. Your posting will only appear in your inbox if someone responds to it. That may seem strange but. . . that's the way it is!

Another way to access the listserv is to sign into your google account and go to <https://groups.google.com/u/1/g/newtonlowerfalls>. From there you can view all of the listserv messages, including any that you've sent. You can also modify how many emails you receive in “my membership settings.”

Remember, the Lower Falls listserv is open to all residents, so **please be courteous**. To keep the list as neighborly as possible, please sign your emails with your full name and address. Thanks!

MARCH MADNESS REPORT

by Drew Williams



After beating out 16 other neighbors, **George Gatzunis** won the 2nd annual NLF March Madness Bracket Challenge. He took home the grand prize of a \$100 gift card to Dick's Sporting Goods (courtesy of the LFIA) and neighborhood bragging rights.

This year came down to the final game of the tournament, with **Jason Gluskin** (betting for his son Garrett) needing a Purdue win to take home first place. In the end, it was UConn who won it all for the second year in a row.

Seven neighbors correctly named UConn as the winner on their brackets, including: **Ozan Kandamar, Alan P, Ksenia Gatzunis, Becky Connor, Mark Trachtenberg, and Derrick Angle**. It was George, however, who had the most correct picks throughout the tournament, allowing him to finish 6 points above Derrick. With Purdue's loss, Jason fell to 8th place.

Next year should be extra exciting, since we will add another bracket challenge for the women's tournament. We look forward to seeing more neighbors join in!

NEIGHBORHOOD SHOUTOUTS

by Cyrisse Jaffee



On May 9, our neighbor, **Dr. Sarah Bagley**, was one of four expert speakers at a Senate subcommittee on improving substance use disorder care. Sarah is the founder of the Center for Addiction

Treatment for Adolescent/Young Adults Who Use Substances (CATALYST) at Boston Medical Center.

Dr. Bagley spoke eloquently about the need for comprehensive, integrated, and affordable care for children and adolescents. In 2022, she noted, “out of 1.8 million 12–17-year-olds with a substance use disorder, only 8,000 sought treatment.” Her remarks were well-received by the committee. To hear more, you can watch the recording online [here](#).

In Memoriam: Betty Steele

Elizabeth (Betty) Steele, whom many knew as a valued friend and neighbor, died on December 31, 2023, at the astonishing age of 103.

Betty lived at 73 Clearwater Road for over 70 years. She worked as a medical technician at the infirmary of Wellesley College for more than 25 years. She and her husband, Edward Harrison Steele Jr, had three children: Bob, Debra, and Jane. She was a grandmother of four and great-grandmother of two.

Barbara Love remembered Betty as “a wonderful neighbor, not only to me, but to all who knew her.” **Susan Bartzak-Graham** wrote, “One of my best friends is Debbie Steele (Gowins), the oldest daughter. Mrs. Steele was one of a kind. She would take us swimming at Wellesley College; we went to graduation ceremonies, watched the traditional hoop roll, and visited the

inside gardens. Once we found an old rowboat that we rebuilt and painted. We stored it in Mrs. Steele’s driveway.

I don’t know how many times she told us to move it. One day she had had enough. I think she started beeping her VW horn the minute she got in the car and, cigarette clutched between her teeth, started yelling “Debra, get the damn boat out of the driveway!” With that, she became a legend. She was an amazing woman who showed us how to live life on our own terms. She is missed.



Ksenia and George Gatzunis on Gail Road welcomed their second son, Nicholas (Nicky) George Gatzunis, on 11/10/23. He joins big brother Alex who will be 3 in August!

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AT ST. MARY’S

by Ann Bonner-Stewart

ann@st-marys-episcopal.org

St. Mary's Episcopal Church organizes and hosts volunteer opportunities throughout the year. Our Lower Falls neighbors are most welcome to participate. Contact Ann for more ways to help.

May Day of Service (5/4)

[Sign up here](#) for all ages service projects the first Saturday of May!

- Make sandwiches & start packing lunches to be distributed on the Boston Common.
- Decorate kids’ snack bags for the Newton Food Pantry.
- Assist with spring clothing & diaper drive-- or drop off donations! We are the proud to partner with [Newton Neighbors Helping Neighbors](#) in supporting their annual diaper drive.

NEW PLANTERS AT COMMUNITY CENTER

by Ted Chapman



Before (above). . . After (below)



The Lower Falls *Improvement* Association lived up to its name by replacing the aged wooden planter at the entrance to the Hamilton Community Center with a decorative concrete block structure. This was accomplished with volunteer labor from neighbors, and a mini excavator that we hired to assist with demolition and site prep.

The new masonry wall should last for generations. The plantings were substantially enhanced. Leaving some of the older structural shrub elements--yellow *Chamaecyparis*, PJM *Rhododendron*, and *Spirea*--we added 2 *Quickfire Hydrangea* and 124 new perennials [including hollyhock, coreopsis, snow-in-summer, globe thistle, beebalm, columbine, dianthus (hardy carnation), tanacetum (painted daisy), and Shasta daisy].

Finally, clumps of daylily were divided and redistributed. These plants are good pollinators and are low maintenance. The dead cherry tree and second bed were removed; a new tree will be donated by the Newton Tree Conservancy, which plants hundreds of street trees throughout Newton.

Lower Falls is fortunate to have neighbors with skills and a volunteer spirit that allowed us to accomplish this job, which would have cost at least \$7000–8000 in labor. The leads on the project were **John McElduff**, **Al Calderon**, **Ted Chapman**, and **Roger LeBlanc**, with able assistance from **Thayer Bialik**, **Michael Oliverio**, **Scott Lanciloti**, **Suzanne Pond**, **Amy Fleming**, **Steve Cooper**, **Bev Chapman**, **Cameron Colgate**, and **Fia Pereira**.



Construction Crew: Chapman, McElduff, Calderone, LeBlanc

The LFIA paid for approximately \$5,000 for materials and \$560 for new plants, using funds donated to the Beautification Committee and the skating rink fund. (Given the vagaries of climate change, the LFIA Board decided a skating rink is no longer a viable activity for the LFIA.) The \$2,500 cost for excavator and dumpster were contributed by the Newton Housing Authority, which owns the land on which the planters stand.

Thank you to all who have supported the work of the Beautification Committee with their [tax-deductible donations](#), in addition to their LFIA dues.

Want to get involved? Contact Suzanne Pond, Committee Chair at suzepond@comcast.net.



LETTER FROM KAY KHAN

Dear Friends of the Newton Lower Falls Neighborhood,

I am writing today to say thank you for the honor and privilege of serving the residents of Newton Lower Falls and beyond, and to let you know this is my 29th and final year in the Massachusetts House of Representatives. (I will still be your representative through December 31, 2024.)

Since 1994, when I first ran for State Representative, I have had an incredible opportunity to work with and for you. Twenty-four years ago, the district lines changed, and we became the 11th Middlesex District--the North side of the city, which stretches from Newton Lower Falls to Newton Corner. After the 2020 census, this district became the largest portion of the city.

Being a part of this community, with an opportunity to work together and cooperate on so many initiatives has been so meaningful, and my hope is that I have made at least a small difference along the way. It is all about the people you meet, the friends you make, and the chance to give back.

My family moved to St. Mary's Street in 1970. I immediately joined the Hamilton School PTO when 2 of my 3 children started school. Later I began volunteering with various community organizations, wrote for the *Newton Times*, and volunteered at the Angier School (after Hamilton closed). The Newton Democratic City Committee was my next step, at the suggestion of my good friend, the Honorable John Stewart, who introduced me to political life when he ran for the Board of Alderman (now City Council), and I helped with his successful campaign.

When I first moved to Newton, I was a registered nurse and then completed an MS in Psychiatric Mental Health at BU School of Nursing. As a

healthcare professional, I felt I could contribute as a legislator. With a lot of support and encouragement--and with an open seat--I ran for the office of State Representative and won.

Working with and for you, I am proud to list a few local accomplishments.

- Under Gov. Patrick, I was able to bring back \$500,000 in state dollars to make major improvements to Hamilton Community Center.
- Working with the DCR and DOT, under Gov. Patrick's Accelerated Bridge Plan, three pedestrian bridges in my district were rebuilt.
 - In 2012, we cut the ribbon of the rail/trail trestle bridge from Concord Street to Wellesley Lower Falls.
 - The bridge in Auburndale (behind Riverside Station), located at what is now called the Riverside Greenway, was completed in 2013.
 - We are looking forward to cutting the ribbon for the third bridge in front of the Lasell Boat House, scheduled for spring 2025.

I have worked long and hard with my partners, the Newton Legislative Delegation, the Mayor, the City Council, Congressmen Barney Frank and Jake Auchincloss, the MBTA, and Transit Matter to make our three commuter rail stations (Auburndale, West Newton, Newtonville) more accessible. I am excited to see the MBTA is slowly moving us in the right direction.

I am also dedicated to building our arts and cultural interests in Newton. I was a founding member of the Newton Cultural Alliance and a board member of the New Phil Orchestra for 29 years. I am also an Advisory board member of the Newton Boys and Girls Club.

Above all, I thank you so much for believing in me. It has been an amazing three decades.



RIVERSIDE DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

by Barbara Gruenthal and Liz Mirabile

The plans by Mark Development (MD) for Riverside have changed—again.

Previously, MD’s plan was to build about 610 residential units and 10,000 square feet of retail. That project would have occupied the entire site to the left of the entrance on Grove Street. The portion of the site to the right of the Grove Street entrance would be retained by the MBTA.

In addition to financing issues, Mayor Fuller requested that MD redesign the plan to allow for the possibility of an office building. MD has responded with its latest plan. *Keep in mind that this plan has not been finalized.* (Also note that because of market conditions, MD currently has no interest in building commercial space.)

Latest Plan (as of 4/10/24)

The new plan creates two parcels within the site. MD plans to enter into a lease with the MBTA for the Phase 1 parcel. That lease would give MD the *option* to lease the Phase 2 parcel.

Phase 1

- 510 residential units, 80% market-rate units and 20% affordable units, at up to 50% AMI (area median income).
- 550-stall garage, with 450 stalls for residents and 100 stalls to be shared by residents and the MBTA.

MD will seek a permit for Phase 1 under the state statute known as “Chapter 40B.” The Zoning

Board of Appeals (ZBA)—*not* the City Council—decides whether to grant permits under Chapter 40B. Because Newton now has “safe harbor” status, the ZBA is free to approve or deny the permit request. MD plans to file its 40B permit request for Phase 1 with the ZBA sometime this summer. (For more on Safe Harbor see <https://figcitynews.com/2024/01/newton-achieves-40b-safe-harbor-status>)



Draft Phase 1 schematic

For those of you who remember the 2021 plan approved by the City Council, note that this draft plan would not include a new ramp to carry traffic from I-95/Rt.128 northbound *into* the site. However, vehicles *leaving* Riverside to go northbound on I-95/Rt.128 would still be able to exit the site on the left side and turn right onto Recreation Road and would not need to use Grove Street.

Phase 2

In keeping with the Mayor Fuller’s request that Phase 2 include an office or life science building, MD has provided a potential plan that would include:

- 90 residential units
- 150,000 SF of office/life science
- 10,000 SF of retail

If the plan is primarily residential and includes affordable units, MD could seek a

comprehensive permit from the ZBA. If the Phase 2 plan includes commercial development, MD would need a special permit from the City Council.



Possible Site Layout Phase 2

If Phase 1 *and* Phase 2, as pictured above, were built, here is how total project would compare to the plan approved in 2021:

	Project Approved in 2021	Phase 1 & Phase 2 concept plan
Total Site Area	13.05 acres	9.12 acres
Gross SF (excluding garages)	1,025,000	842,000
Residential Units	550	600
Lab/Office (SF)	362,235	157,000
Retail SF	21,852	10,000

The Riverside Liaison Committee has been discussing with MD our concerns that the plans allow for a possible significant Phase 2 commercial development, yet don't include ramp to carry traffic from I-95/Rt. 128 northbound directly (without using Grove Street) into the site.

We will keep the neighborhood posted as discussions continue.

FROM OUR CITY COUNCILORS

Randy Block

I was honored to be elected to the City Council last November as the Ward 4 Councilor. Since I was sworn in on January 1, I've heard from a lot of people about many different issues. A few weeks ago I got a call from a constituent pointing out that a lot of trash had accumulated on Grove Street by the Riverside parking lot. I contacted DPW, which is in charge of trash collection and cleanup. They promised to contact the MBTA to see what their plans were to clean up the trash on state property.

On April 8, I was driving by Riverside and noticed a work crew. After chatting with them, I learned that April 8 is "Spring Cleanup Day," and they were hired by the MBTA to clean up the area. Sometimes government works the way it should!

Anyone with observations or complaints can reach me by email at RBlock@newtonma.gov or by phone at 617-312-5573.

Josh Krintzman

Julie and Josh Krintzman have lived in Lower Falls for 20 years. Their children (Matthew, 18, Katelyn 16, and Daniel, 14) all went to Williams School, Brown Middle School, and (as of next year) Newton South High School--which is also where Julie and Josh went to school.) Josh was the President of the LFIA for several years, then served as chair of the Newton Charter Commission, before being elected as a Councilor-at-Large in 2018.

The Lowdown is the newsletter of the Lower Falls Improvement Association (LFIA)

LFIA website: <https://newtonlowerfalls.org>

Editors (this issue): Michael Lorant, Cyrisse Jaffee, Keerthi Sadananda

THE FOX CAME OUT ON A CHILLY NIGHT

by Cyrisse Jaffee

We know that our neighborhood is home to a wide variety of wildlife: bunnies, squirrels, chipmunks, coyotes, wolves, owls, and more. But this spring we've had at least two fox dens! One family settled under a shed on Hallron Road, with 5 kits (also called pups or cubs). Another, with 4 or 5 kits, made a shed on Pierrepont Road their home.



The fox den on Hallron Rd.



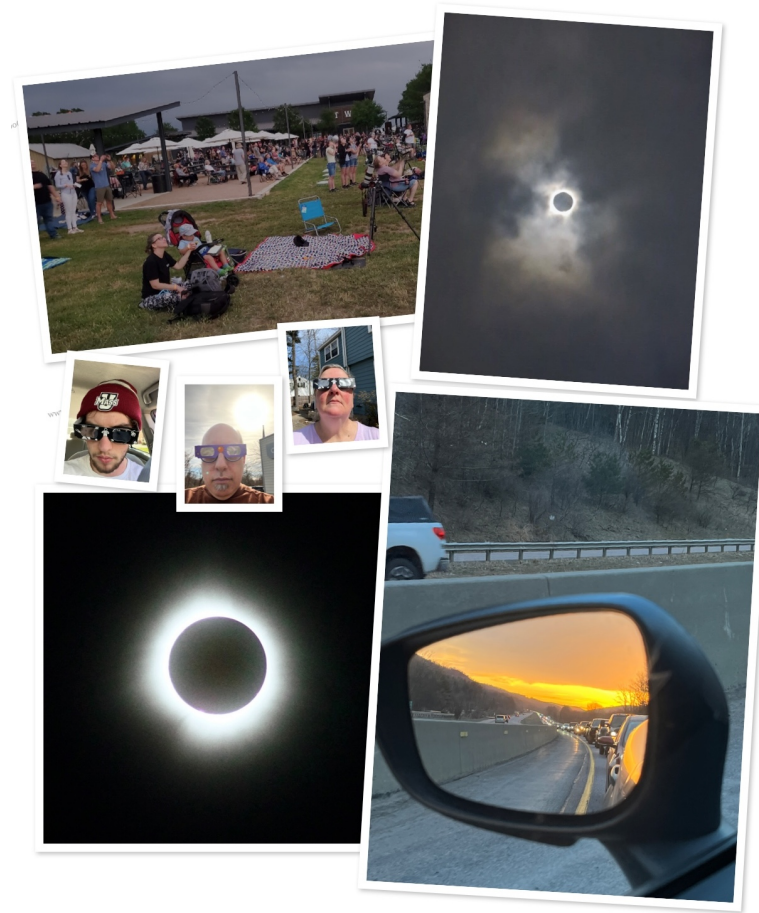
*Mama Fox (we think!)
Photo by Alison Page*

Foxes primarily eat small rodents, squirrels, rabbits, birds, eggs, insects, vegetation, and fruit.

Some of us are happy that they keep our plant-eating bunny & squirrel population under control and are a lot better for the environment than using poison or chemicals to keep critters away. (They're also very cute!) However, foxes can pose a threat to pets. Keep yours leashed or indoors. You can read more about foxes [here](#).

THE ECLIPSE!

Many Lower Falls neighbors gathered at the field to view the historic eclipse on April 8. Others traveled near and far.



Top row: John, Amanda, and Lucas of St. Mary's Street at the Texas Wine Collective in Fredericksburg, TX, along with hundreds of other eclipse chasers.

Middle row: Casey, Michael, and Sheila of Crehore Drive watching the eclipse from Amherst, MA and Lower Falls.

Bottom row: Photo taken by Joey in Burlington, VT, as he braved long drive back home.

214 CONCORD STREET: STEEPED IN HISTORY

by Tori Zissman



Every house has stories to tell. This house is no exception. It was owned by not one, but three prominent papermill owners in the 1800s. A book published by the Jackson Homestead (now Historic Newton) in the 1970s says the house may have been a stop on the Underground Railroad. Intrigued by this possibility, I decided to try to find out more about the house's 19th century residents.

In 1817, Joseph Foster and a partner purchased property along Concord Street and the Charles River for \$3,100. Three papermills already operated near this location. Foster became sole owner of two, where he made bookbinder's board. Another of Foster's business partners, Amos Lyon, was a Lower Falls representative to the New England Anti-Slavery Convention. Could this be the Underground Railroad connection?

Joseph Foster married twice. His first wife was Harriet Durant, daughter of Thomas Durant, the master carpenter responsible for the construction of St. Mary's Church. They had three children. After Harriet died, Foster married Eleanor Small, the granddaughter of John Ware, founder of the first paper mill in Lower Falls in 1790. They had two children, Harriet (Hattie) and John.

Sadly, Foster's finances floundered in the 1840s and he was forced to enter a plea of insolvency

in the County Court. When Foster died in 1853 of "consumption" (tuberculosis), his properties were sold to another local papermill owner, Thomas Rice, Jr. His wife received \$100 to relinquish her claim to the estate and moved to Roxbury with her children, where she worked as a seamstress.

PAPER MILL ESTATE FOR SALE. The establishment well known as "FOSTER'S MILLS," situated at NEWTON LOWER FALLS, including a dwelling house and out buildings, with about seven acres of land located in the village and affording a number of fine building lots.

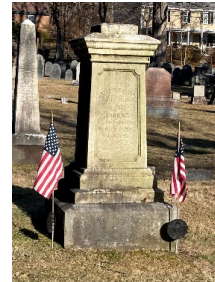
The Mills are most eligibly located upon CHARLES RIVER, and upon the dam next above the Waltham Cotton Mills, and within a few rods of the terminus of the Newton Branch Railroad. The magnitude of this water power and its nearness to Boston render it worthy the attention of capitalists and manufacturers as a rare chance for a judicious investment.

For further particulars enquire of the subscriber at AUBURNDALE (one mile from the premises), who will afford facilities for examination of the property.

EBENEZER BROADBURY,
Assignee of estate of Joseph Foster.

April 7 1853

Joseph Foster is buried at St. Mary's, where a prominent marker stands in a corner of the cemetery just a few feet away from the front door of 214 Concord Street.



Joseph Foster's two older children remained in Newton Lower Falls for a time. In the Newton census of 1855, they are listed in the household of their former neighbor, Zenas Crane's widow, Rebecca, at 206-208 Concord Street. Both young men list their occupation as "papermaker" and they were likely boarding with Mrs. Crane

The story of Foster's children by his second marriage takes a more tragic turn. In 1868, - Hattie, age 21, married George Dunham. A few months later their first child, George Jr, was born. After a daughter died in infancy, they had two more boys, John and Frederick. Hattie Foster Dunham died just six months after Frederick was born. The cause listed on the death certificate is "homicide." Local newspapers reported the tragic details of Hattie's death. Hattie's younger

brother, John, went on to raise her children. (Note that the information in this article contains details of violence and domestic abuse.)

The murder of Mrs. George Dunham of Norwood by her husband and his attempted suicide, on Monday, was a peculiarly horrible affair. The family physician had warned Mrs. Dunham of her husband's insane condition, and it is supposed that she was attempting to remove a revolver from a mantel in the room where they were found, when he attacked her with a knife. The woman was terribly cut up about the throat and chest, and, when found, her infant child was sitting close by her, with its hands smeared with the mother's blood, in which it had been paddling. Dunham has confessed the murder, and says that he wishes he had been successful in taking his own life. Norwood has gained an unenviable reputation for such tragedies. It is only a few years since Rev. Mr. Marston and his child were killed by Mrs. Marston, who then took her own life, and there have been a large number of suicides in Norwood within a few years.

1890s, shows the house with floor to ceiling windows, front and side porches with bracketed pillars, brackets under the eaves, and interesting scrollwork around the curved dormers. What appears to be a driveway is "Hagar Path" which was listed as a footpath in 1893.

For more detailed information and sources, contact Tori at tzissman@gmail.com.

Back in Lower Falls, Thomas Rice, Jr. sold 214 Concord Street and Foster's mills to Augustus C. Wiswall in 1869 for \$9,000. A.C. Wiswall led a colorful life before settling here. According to family lore, - he went to sea at age 17 on a voyage bound for Calcutta, but the ship burned. His next voyage to Brazil reportedly ended in mutiny.

Augustus moved to North Carolina before the Civil War. Operating one of the few paper mills in the south, he made paper for the Confederate government, including banknotes. After the war, Augustus served as a member of the North Carolina state legislature before returning to Newton. He expanded Foster's mill operations to include wallpaper and colored papers.

A notable feature of 214 Concord Street is its mansard roof, a popular style in the 1860s. The roof may have been added and the house expanded by Thomas Rice, Jr. The Rice family owned several houses along Washington Street (now demolished) all with mansard roofs. This photo, likely taken in the

