

Brighton In The 1830s  
by William P. Marchione  
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In the 1830s, the principal landmark in the Town of Brighton was its Cattle Market --- a great institution that largely dominated the economic life of the community and that stood on the threshold of a period of rapid expansion. The cattle market was located on the grounds of the Cattle Fair Hotel on the north side of the Watertown Highway as Washington Street was then known, in the area between present day Parsons and Market Streets and it extended back as far as present-day Bennett Street. I use the term "present-day" in describing these streets, because neither Parsons nor Market nor Bennett Street existed in the 1830s.

The total population of the town in 1830 was a mere 972 persons. The number grew to 1425 by 1840, an impressive 45 percent increase, but the community was still very sparsely settled. There are more than 80 times as many people living in Allston-Brighton today as there were living there in 1830. The Brighton of the 1830s was ethnically homogeneous, predominantly Anglo-Saxon and Protestant in makeup. Only three Irish families lived in the town in 1837: the Coyles, the Kelleys, and the Cochrans. This would change dramatically in the next decade as a result of the potato famine immigration. The 1830 population was quite young: only 35 of its 977 residents were over 60 (what a contrast to present-day Allston- Brighton!). On the other hand, an amazing 707 of its 977 residents (over 70 percent) were under the age of 30. One of the most notable features of the population of the town in these years was a disproportionately high number of young men, drawn to Brighton no doubt by its thriving commercial life. The population was also highly mobile; nearly two-thirds of families living in Brighton in 1830 had not lived there in 1810. If the records of the Brighton Congregational Church are any indication, families moved in and out of the community with surprising frequency. Those entering most often came from nearby towns, especially Boston, while departing families frequently migrated to the Northern New England states, especially New Hampshire.

Only the major roadways existed back then. **This** 1830 map indicates that the entire town contained a total of 15 roads: those were in the Allston section, Brighton Avenue and North Beacon Street (then known jointly as the Brighton or Mill Dam Road, since they connected Brighton to the recently constructed Mill Dam that crossed the as yet unfilled Back Bay); Western Avenue (then called River Street) which passed through the northern part of the town, a road built by Cambridge developers with the object of funneling traffic around rather than through Brighton: Cambridge Street which provided access to the Boston and Cambridgeport Bridge; North Harvard and Harvard Streets, the so-called Roxbury Highway, which extended from the Great Bridge at Harvard Square to the Brookline line, giving access to Boston via the Roxbury Neck; and finally, Allston Street, which in this period was the principal roadway connecting Allston with the southeastern corner of the town. One should bear in mind, incidentally, that the term Allston was completely unknown in Brighton in the 1830s. The section

that we today call Allston was then referred to as the eastern end of Brighton. The name Allston was attached to the area only in the late 1860s.

The roadways in the western section of the town were Washington Street (the aforementioned Watertown Highway), which like the Roxbury Highway gave access to Boston via the Neck; Market Street, then called Meetinghouse Lane; Faneuil Street, one of the town's oldest thoroughfares; Nonantum Street (part of an original Indian path and probably the oldest road in the town; Foster Street, known as Seaver's Lane; the combination of Academy Hill Road and Chestnut Hill Avenue, called Rockland Street owing to its many ledge outcroppings; and finally South Street, a combination of present-day South Street and the part of Commonwealth Avenue that leads to the Newton boundary.

There were besides roadways a few private or semi-private lanes that later became public streets, but the fifteen I just identified are the only roads that appear on the map that the town prepared for the Commonwealth in 1830: these were, presumably, the roads for which the town government accepted responsibility.

The lane that in the 1850s became Lake Street, in the thirties led only as far as Mr. Charles Hardy's house, just past the present Rogers Park; beyond that point it was nothing more than a foot path which led over the hill to the Brighton Poor House, on present-day Undine Road

Little is known of the Brighton Poor House at this early date. Actually such institutions were relatively new in the 1830s. All we know of the Brighton Poor House are the names of some of its inmates, as identified by Mrs Merwin: "In the Poor House," she wrote, "there were only little Miss Jones, Daddy Baker and "old Cutting" with Mr. Sammy Townsend to look after their comfort. I do not mean to be disrespectful in speaking of them but that is what they were always called." The poor houses of this era patterned itself after the family. The keeper, in this case Mr. Samuel Townsend, and his family, lived in the institution, which was run on the same principles as any family farm. The poor house (on Undine Rd) is still standing. I wonder if its current owners are aware of the use their residence served back in the 1830s.

Brighton Center contained two large hotels in the 1830s. The Cattle Fair Hotel was built in 1830 by the Cattle Fair Hotel Corporation. It was managed by Zachariah B. Porter for most of the decade. Prior to 1830, cattle marketing activities had been carried on at the site of two taverns--- the Bull's Head Tavern located about a quarter mile southeast of the village on the Watertown Highway, and the Hastings Tavern, which stood on the site on which the Cattle Fair Hotel would afterwards be built. When the organizers of the Cattle Fair Hotel Corporation first petitioned the legislature for incorporation, they maintained that a new facility was needed because "the other principal houses of the place are for the accommodation of pleasure parties, and not frequented by drovers." The structures they contemplated building, the petitioners noted, would cost about \$25,000. The grounds of the old market, at the Bull's Head Tavern, then contained 40 to 50 large animal pens, while the Hastings Tavern had only about 20. The 1819 decision of the Massachusetts

Society for the Promotion of Agriculture to locate their exhibition hall and fair grounds in Brighton Center probably contributed to the gradual transfer of the cattle market to the Brighton Center location---a process completed with the construction of the Cattle Fair Hotel. In a later petition the incorporators promised "to erect a shed, or sheds, not less than two hundred feet by eighteen feet on the ground; and suitable for the shelter of horses and carriages and conveniently located for the use of the public , to whom it shall be free of all charge for the use thereof, and good and convenient barns, with suitable and sufficient stalls to secure and feed not less than one hundred head of neat cattle." An 1834 advertisement described the Cattle Fair Hotel in the following terms:

"The accommodations of this house are upon the most extensive scale. It has been arranged with particular attention to the Traveler and Drover, both as to comfort and convenience."

Cotillion Parties, Engine Companies, Clubs and all Associations, provided for at instant notice. The larder will always be provided with the best the seasons afford and the Bar, as well as every other part of the House, will be attended to with strict reference to the comfort, convenience, and satisfaction of the patrons of the establishment. "

Zachariah Porter, the manager of the Cattle Fair Hotel, left Brighton for North Cambridge in the late 30s, where he established a hotel, called the Porter House, as well as a rival cattle market. Porter Square was named for this individual. History best remembers Zach Porter, however, as the namesake of the Porter House steak.

The other Brighton Center hotel, the Brighton Hotel, stood on the site of the police station at the eastern end of the village. This structure had once been the home of the Winship family, the founders of the cattle market. In 1820, Samuel Dudley, former manager of Hastings Tavern, purchased the mansion, added a second story, and converted it to a hotel. The Marquis de Lafayette stayed at the Brighton Hotel during his American tour in 1826.

The Brighton hotels were favorite place of refreshment for upper class Bostonians following a ride to the country on the recently constructed Mill Dam Road. Brighton continued to be a favorite destination for Boston sleighing parties and pleasure trips well into the 19th century. In the novel, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, William Dean Howells, places his characters in a carriage on the Brighton Road. Many artists, including Winslow Homer, depicted sleighing and racing in the vicinity of these hotels for leading Boston publications such as *Ballou's Pictorial*.

The town contained at least three other hotels in the thirties: I've already mentioned the old Buffs Head Tavern, which was situated on Washington Street just below present-day St Gabriel's Monastery. The other two, likewise combination of the functions of taverns and inns, were located in North Brighton. The Taft Tavern, operated by Reed Taft, still stands at the corner of Market Street and Western Avenue. The Rice Tavern, originally the residence of Samuel Sparhawk House, stood on River Street (now Western Avenue) about where the Star Market (370 Western Ave) is situated today. Historian J.P.C. Winship also makes mention of a Charles

River Hotel existing in 1828, but it is unclear whether this was a separate establishment or an alternate name for the Taft or Rice establishments.

The cattle trade helps explain the large number of hotels in the town--- a number that would grow appreciably over the next twenty or twenty- five years as the cattle trade expanded. By 1844 the town would have eight licensed inns and taverns. The period between 1834 and 1860 marked the high point of the cattle trade in Brighton. However, the cattle trade was important long before the 1830s. Originating in 1775, the local trade earned the Winship family a sizable fortune within very few years. By 1780 they were prosperous enough to build the large mansion at the eastern end of the village; by 1790 Jonathan Winship II was the largest meatpacker in Massachusetts, exporting large quantities of salted beef to European markets. The presence here of a prospering cattle trade led, in turn, to the location in the Brighton of a second great landmark of the day ---the fair grounds and exhibition hall of the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture which were established in 1818 on the hill to the rear of the Congregational Church, an eminence known in the 1800s as Agriculture Hill. Here every October farmers from all corners of Massachusetts gathered to participate in the Brighton Fair and Cattle Show. This event was held in Brighton for a total of 17 years---that is until 1835. The exhibition building, known as Agricultural Hall stood at the crest of the hill, where the Winship School is situated today, It was relocated to the southeast corner of Chestnut Hill Avenue and Washington Streets in the 1840s where it still stands, Brighton Center's oldest surviving structure. The Winship School incidentally, is very aptly named, since it was Abiel Winship, eldest son of the founder of the founder of the Cattle Market, who provided the society with the land on which the fair grounds were laid out.

The annual Brighton Fair and Cattle Show was a lively event. Weeks before it opened farmers began sending exhibit items to Brighton. The displays "embraced everything that could interest a farmer or be of benefit to agriculture," according to an annual report of the society This event drew thousands of farmers to Brighton each October. The focal point of the Fair, Agricultural Hall, a two-story building measuring 36 by 70 feet, was used to exhibit the latest farm machinery as well as mammoth vegetables and examples of rural handicrafts. Prize cattle was displayed in pens on the slopes of the hill. This was a major event in the agricultural life of Massachusetts in a day when agriculture was still the principal occupation. The fair drew major figures to Brighton. Cynthia Krussel, Marshfield historian, informs me that the Daniel Webster papers contain many references to the Brighton Fair and Cattle Show, Webster who was a friend of Brighton landowner and horticulturalist Gotham Parsons, frequently attended the Brighton Fair.

The withdrawal of the society from Brighton in 1835 was almost certainly related to the revolution in transportation that occurred in eastern Massachusetts in the 1830s. The construction of an extensive network of railroads in the early 30s---the Boston and Providence, the Boston and Lowell, and the Boston and Worcester--- transformed the state's agricultural economy, shifting its geographical center westward, which prompted the Society to relocate the fair to a more

western and convenient site. I will have more to say about the railroad's impact on Brighton shortly.

The removal of the Mass Society for Promoting Agriculture from Brighton in 1835 did not signal a decline in farming; on the contrary the prosperity of Brighton's farm economy increased appreciably in the 1830s and subsequent decades in response to the growth of its primary market, the burgeoning City of Boston. According to the 1820 census, two-thirds of Brighton's work force was engaged in farming. Forty years later, in 1860, the town still contained 57 farms comprising over 1,300 acres---roughly two-thirds of the surface area of the town. However, while farming continued to be important, the nature of local agriculture almost certainly changed in these years. Again, there is little more to go by here than common sense. The growth of Boston and the building of the railroad almost certainly led to a shift in the character of farming from staple crops to fruit, vegetables and other perishables for the Boston market. The railroads also probably led to decline of dairying activities in Brighton since milk and milk products could be obtained from more westerly locations once the railroad was in place.

Before proceeding to describe some of the more remote Brighton landmarks, I'd like to complete our survey of Brighton Center. As one entered the village by way of Cambridge Street the first major structure seen was the Brighton Hotel on the site of the present police station. To the right of the hotel stood a small building, which in the early 1830s served both as the law office of Abraham Edwards and the headquarters of the Brighton Social Library. The Brighton Social Library was a private institution organized by the local gentry in 1824, open only to those willing to pay a \$5 a year membership fee. In 1836 it contained 504 volumes. Not until 1864 was a public library established in Brighton.

The hill where St. Elizabeth's Hospital now stands was without buildings, and probably also without trees. It was part of a large estate that extended back as far as the present Fidelis Way. In the 1820s, the estate had belonged to Samuel Wyllys Pomeroy, who owned the Bull's Head Tavern and had hoped to keep the Brighton Cattle Market at that location. The Mansion House stood on the site of St Gabriel's Monastery. Pomeroy moved to Cincinnati sometime prior to 1830. After 1833, the estate passed into the hands of one John DeWolfe, about whom, unfortunately, I can tell you nothing whatever.

While the only map that we have for the 1830s is short on detail, we are fortunate in having a verbal description of the town that more than makes up for that deficiency. I refer to the so-called Merwin Reminiscences which appeared in the Brighton Item in the mid-1880s, a series of thirteen articles by Mary Jane Kingsley Merwin, daughter of Moses Kingsley of Brighton, in which the now elderly former resident described the Brighton of her girlhood, that is of the late 1820s and early 1830s in exhaustive detail. These reminiscences constitute a major historical resource that the society should at some point publish.

According to Mrs. Merwin, the first buildings one saw on entering the village from the east, was a structure at the southeast corner of Cambridge and Washington Streets that housed the harness shop of Herrick Aiken and a dry goods store operated by a Mr. Savage.

The next building, which stood about where Winship Street and Washington Street intersect today, was the wheelwright shop of Jesse Osborn. According to Mrs. Merwin, this structure "stood in from the roadway some way, leaving a space that is usually filled with vehicles of all kinds that need repairing.

The next building on the same side of the highway was the blacksmith shop of Stephen Stone, located about where the new medical building stands today. Rarely were buildings demolished in these years. Stone's shop had been moved from the opposite side of the highway, where it had originally served as Brighton's first schoolhouse, dating from 1722. Mrs. Merwin recounted how "the schoolchildren loved to look in at the open doors (of Stone's blacksmith shop) and see the glowing fires and watch the workman as with one hand he blew the great bellows and with the other held the iron, which was soon pounded on the anvil, the bright sparks flying in the meantime. Nor was the pleasure less," she continued, "when everything was laid ready for the great roun<sup>g</sup> fire outside when the 'tire' was heated and as it was lighted and burned we thought it beautiful---and so it was." There were dangers, however, for the curious, she continued. "One morning going to school rather early I saw one of the girls run out screaming with her clothes all in a blaze. The men rushed from the shop put out the fire and provided a way for her to be taken home but if Susan Davis is living today, she probably carries the scars of those burns." Next to the blacksmith shop stood a firehouse, a one-story structure with two large doors. Here was kept the fire engine and the town hearse (I will have more to say about Brighton's burial practices shortly). According to Mrs. Merwin there were no enrolled fire companies in the town in the late 1820s. The town elected fire wardens who had overall responsibility for firefighting. "The labor at a fire was voluntary," she recounted, "and the result of a desire to help in time of trouble or the novelty of the matter may have been the attraction in those quiet times." By the 1830s, organized firefighting companies had been established. Membership in a fire company entitled a resident to be excused from poll taxes in the 1830s.

The next structure on the south side of the highway was the Town and House or town hall. The building in question was the original Little Cambridge Meetinghouse, built in 1744. It had been moved from its location at the northeast corner of Washington and Market Streets in 1809, when the town built a bigger church, and had ever since served as a combination town hall and school house. Brighton did not construct a town hall until 1841.

Next came the residence of blacksmith Stephen Stone who resided in the former First Church parsonage, a building that still stands, at the southeast corner of Academy Hill Road and Washington Street. This building accommodated not only the Stone family but Mr. Stone's apprentices. Between Stone's residence and town house was a large piece of land used as a garden and orchard.

Mrs. Merwin described Mr. Stone's orchard as follows: There was an orchard of apple trees," she noted, "the boughs of which, if not the fruit could be reached by the scholars from the back window (of the schoolhouse). How sweet and beautiful the blossoms in the springtime: just under these windows was the footpath that all those who worked in the blacksmith shop close by, traveled back and forth as they went to and from their meals. Cherry trees were on the place also, and a fine vegetable garden, while on the south side by the fence which marked the dividing line was a long row of red and white currant bushes." When Stephen Stone died in 1832 an apprentice, Henry Hildreth, took his place in the blacksmith shop.

The north side of the highway was less developed. After the Brighton Hotel came a large piece of open land. The first structure one encountered beyond this property was a long commercial building housing The Baldwin & Murdock Store. Here general supplies and dry goods could be purchased. An ell to the rear of this building was used as a stable where customers rested and fed their horses. The upper story accommodated the "men in the storekeeper's employ. Mrs. Merwin wrote that "an addition was afterwards made at the east end of the store, which was more convenient for teams, and over these sheds were located the business places of Mr. Cunningham, a barber, and Mr. Fletcher, a shoemaker: When Thaddeus Baldwin died in 1834, the Warren brothers came into possession of the store. Captain William Warren's oldest son, wrote Mrs. Merwin, was a druggist in Boston. He transferred himself to Brighton, and so was established, in what had earlier been Murdock & Baldwin's dry goods department, the first drugstore in Brighton. The building in question stood on the site on which the Warren Building would afterwards be built.

A short distance west was the house of Jesse Osborne the wheelwright. The Osborne house, incidentally, accommodated two families— Mrs. Merwin's family, the Kingsley's, resided in part of the house at one time. She described this the apartment as consisting of "but one good-sized room on the lower floor, and an extension which was used as a back room or kitchen: on the second floor there was one room; while on the third floor was part of an unfinished garret, which was petitioned off by bedquilts and blankets fastened to the rafters. "Portieres" I think those hanging partitions then are called at the present day." The lifestyle of the Kingsleys fell somewhat short of gracious living.

Between the Osborne House and the First Church was a green where the local militia drilled each month, and to its rear a vegetable garden.

One of the first acts of the newly established Town of Brighton back in 1807 had been the authorization of the construction of a new church to replace the overcrowded 1744 meetinghouse. Construction of this new edifice was not completed until 1809. It may surprise you to learn that the Town of Brighton assumed this responsibility of constructing this building (as well as paying the minister's salary). Today, of course, church and state are totally separate. In 1809, however, there was only one church in Brighton, the First Church, an established

institution entitled to public support. This legal bond between church and state persisted until 1837 when the commonwealth finally did away with the arrangement. Massachusetts was, in fact, the last to abandon establishmentarianism, as this practice was called.

A short distance north of the church, on Meetinghouse Lane (the present Market Street), was the town burial ground. In the 1830s burials were a public responsibility, carried out by the Sexton of the First Church, the carpenter, Joseph Warren. The burial ground, of course, belonged to the town but so also did the hearse, which was parked alongside the fire engine in the firehouse. His monopoly of undertaking activities, however, led to complaints, and in May of 1831, the town asked Warren to reduce the customary burial fee. The sexton turned them down flat. He responded that "he had always charged as low as he could afford, and that he could not (perform burials) for any less and that oftentimes it did not pay him." It was a job, he continued, that "he had been wanting to get rid of. this twenty years, and that he was willing anyone should have it for he wanted nothing to do with it." At this point, the town turned to William Fletcher, the shoemaker, negotiated a more acceptable fee schedule. Under its terms, Fletcher agreed "to dig a grave or open a tomb and close through the year for one dollar; "to tend a funeral for one dollar; and to ring the church bell for fifty cents. "Mr. Fletcher," the committee reported, "will go to the house of the deceased, measure the corpse, go and get the coffin and carry the coffin to the house and safely deposit the corpse in the coffin if the coffin is made." The report further noted: "Your committee finds that they can get coffins made for grown persons for three dollars a piece and smaller in proportion... As to a horse to draw the hearse your committee have made no provision, the whole expense of a grown person will be six dollars and smaller in proportion." Thus, the entire expense of a funeral in Brighton in the 1830s was a modest \$6.

Before leaving the burial ground, it should be noted that it was then twice its present size. In 1871 about half of the graveyard was obliterated, when Market Street, the road connecting the cattle market to the railroad in North Brighton, was widened. Some 200 bodies were at that time removed to the Evergreen Cemetery, which had opened in 1850. The City of Boston is currently studying the Market Street Burial Ground and plans to do some long overdue restoration work at that location.

Opposite the graveyard stood the grounds of the Cattle Market. Mrs. Merwin recounted that the principal entrance to the stockyards was by way of a gate on Market Street, directly across from the burial ground. This gate also marked the southern boundary of the yards. It was the only point of access to the cattle pens and was opened only on Market Day, which in this period was held on Thursdays. Cattle was kept in the larger pens on the southern side, after which came smaller enclosures for sheep extending all the way to the gate. Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1841 description of Market Day in Brighton has appeared in so many different publications that I will not take time here to quote more than the opening paragraph: "Thursday of every week," wrote Hawthorne, "which by common consent and custom is the 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 and spectators, 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.

This marked the furthest extent of commercial development on the north side of Washington Street, for beyond the cattle market stood only private homes. The Whittemore Mansion, the residence of Dr. James M. Whittemore, stood on the site of Flanagan's Market (427 Washington St). It was built in 1831 as a wedding gift by Mrs. Whittemore's uncle, Gorham Parsons; quite a few older Brighton residents remember the structure, which survived into the late 1930s.

The next house on the north side of the highway was the residence of Dr. Noah Worcester a man known to his contemporaries as "The Apostle of Peace," the most important resident of Brighton in the early 19th century. Worcester and David Low Dodge of New York are often described as the co-founders of the American peace movement. Dr. Worcester moved to Brighton from New Hampshire in 1813. In the following year, he wrote his most important work, *A Solemn Review of the Custom of War*, which criticized war in general, and the unpopular War of 1812 in particular. Later he helped found the Massachusetts Peace Society, serving as its secretary for many years, and also edited a peace journal. This highly respected reformer and liberal theologian, incidentally, also served as Brighton's first postmaster. The post office operated out of his house (Winship tells us that it was his daughter Sally who actually did the work, however). A historical marker was placed on the site, but it makes no mention of Worcester's reform activities, only of his services as postmaster. When Worcester died in 1837 the job of postmaster went to a Mr. J. B. Mason, and the post office shifted to a building that stood directly opposite the Cattle Fair Hotel, on the southwest corner of Baldwin Place.

Returning now to the opposite side of the highway, the first building west of Academy Hill Road (then called Rockland Street) was the General "Store of Elijah White & Sons. Mrs. Merwin wrote that this was a large store for such a small place as Brighton, owing to its location on the major highway linking Boston with communities to the west. "The farmers from Worcester County and other places," she noted, "as well as traders who go to Boston for their supplies make this a stopping place at which man and beast are expected to rest and be refreshed and on the return the large teams stop again and family supplies are purchased." Elijah White incidentally, lived a short distance away, in a house still standing at the corner of Academy Hill Road and Peaceable Street.

Just beyond Elijah White's house, Mrs. Merwin wrote, was a foot path. "There is a great gate that can be opened for a load of wood or any other necessity but you can enter the path by the side of this gate through the 'opening that is left for that purpose. Here you will find a very old house." I wish I knew its history and who thought of building it in such a remote place when there was plenty of land on the public road. The house in question was the old Ebenezer Smith house, which still stands at 17-19 Peaceable Street. This building, dating from about 1725, was the original farmhouse on the south side of the highway. It was here that the Winships first lived

when they came to Little Cambridge from Lexington in the 1770s. Captain Jonathan Winship, the China Trade merchant and founder of Winship Gardens, was born in this house in 1778. And it was here also that Rev. John Foster and his talented wife, the authoress Hannah Foster, lived when they settled in Brighton in 1784, before they moved to the Parsonage. A 'short distance away, at the intersection of Academy Hill Road and Chestnut Hill Avenue, stood the ruins of the old Winship slaughterhouse.

The town's important slaughtering industry began in this building in the Revolutionary period. As previously noted, by the 1790s Jonathan Winship had become the largest meatpacker in the state, putting up some 5,000 barrels of salted beef for foreign markets alone. Slaughtering, though closely related to the buying and selling of cattle, was a distinct industry. While I have no specifics as to the number of slaughterhouses in Brighton in the 1830s, there can be little question that slaughtering, carried on in a multitude of small-scale enterprises, was a major local industry; it was a business, moreover, destined to undergo major expansion in the years that followed.

The next structure, the Bank of Brighton stood opposite the Cattle Fair 'Hotel and cattle market, at the northwest corner of present-day Chestnut Hill Avenue (that portion of the avenue did not then exist). The original Bank of Brighton, dating from 1828, had been forced to close its doors in 1830. It was reorganized, however, in 1832, under the presidency of Gorham Parsons, prospering until 1883, when it was absorbed by the First National Bank of Boston. The records of the Bank of Brighton survive; they are in the Baker Library at Harvard Business School.

The next major building, which stood on the site of the Home Supply hardware store (366 Washington St) was the Heard block, Charles Heard, who came to Brighton from Sudbury in the 1820s, built a store at this site in which he sold dry goods and operated a tailoring business. Heard was the first person in Brighton to sell ready-made clothing. Winship tells us that two ladies, a Miss Lawton and Miss Gill, operated millinery and dressmaking establishments out of the same building. This slide shows the site as it appeared in the 1850s, after the Brighton Market Bank replaced the Bank of Brighton (in 1854), but before the elm tree in front of the Heard Store came down (in 1858).

Next came a single-story structure, a grocery store operated by J. B. Mason, which stood at the southwest corner of Baldwin Place; this being the building I have already identified as Brighton's second post office.

One next encountered the lane leading up Agricultural hill to the exhibition hall and fair grounds of the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture (present-day Dighton Street), the site of the annual Brighton Fair and Cattle Show.

Just beyond the fairgrounds stood the headquarters of an institution destined to survive into our times: the Brighton Evangelical Congregational Church. Now the oldest surviving Brighton

institution, the Congregational Church is currently celebrating its 160th anniversary. It came into being in 1827 as a result of a division in the old First Church over doctrinal issues. The founders of the new society were evangelicals: they craved a more personal and emotionally satisfying religion than they had earlier received in the old church under the leadership of Rev. John Foster, who was of the Unitarian persuasion. Since the Congregational Church is about to publish my account of the beginnings of that church, I won't go into the matter in any depth tonight but refer you to that publication. It should be emphasized, however, that in the 1830s Brighton had only two churches---and that a good deal of hostility existed between them---hostility that influenced the social and political life of the community in significant ways. I will have more to say on that subject shortly. The drawing of the 1827 Congregational Church building that appears in the slide, incidentally, is somewhat inaccurate for the 1830s, since it shows the building as it appeared in the 1840s, after a bell tower and Gothic Revival tracery were added to the windows.

Beyond the Congregational Church were only private residences.

Thaddeus Baldwin lived in a house that stood on the site of the New World Bank (307 Washington St). This storekeeper was an important leader of the Congregationalist Church as well as an influential figure in town politics.

Two houses stood at the corner of Foster and Washington Streets. On the eastern was a small one-story house belonging to the family of John Field, a member of the Congregationalist Church.

On the opposite corner of Foster Street was the residence of Rev. Daniel Austin, who in 1828 had succeeded retiring John Foster as the Minister of the First Church.

Brighton had three great industries in the 19th century---its cattle trade, its slaughterhouses and its commercial nurseries. When the community finally got around to devising a town seal in the 1860s it chose a greenhouse motif (one of the local banks having already adopted a bull for its seal. In the 1830s there were only three horticultural establishments in the town; the industry was, in fact, only a decade old. It would not hit its stride until the 1840 to 1860 period, when it became one of the two most important horticultural centers in the Boston area (the other being Roxbury). Brighton's first commercial nursery was established about 1820 by the brothers Jonathan and Francis Winship on a 37-acre property in North Brighton. Winship Gardens, as the establishment was called, extended from the intersection of Faneuil Street and Market Street to the shore of the Charles River about where Martignetti's Liquor (1650 Soldiers Field Road) stands today. Though relatively remote in 1820, this area was to become much more accessible in the course of the 1820s and 1830s, especially for Bostonians, owing to a series of major transportation improvements construction in 1820 of the Mill Dam Road, with an 1822 extension through Brighton (the present Brighton Avenue and North Beacon Streets) that passed directly through the Winship property; followed by the construction in 1824 of Western Avenue to the threshold of Winship's Gardens; and finally, and most decisively, the building through Brighton

in 1834 of the Boston & Worcester Railroad. The railroad's first depot outside of Boston stood on the very grounds of Winship's Gardens. I think it highly likely that the Winships bought the North Brighton property with prior knowledge of these transportation improvements, for the Winship family had a long history of shrewd business ventures---daring and imaginative projects that extended all the way to Hawaii, the Pacific Northwest and even Russian Alaska.

By the 1830s, Winship Gardens had become one of the three most important landmarks in the town (the others being the cattle market and the fairgrounds in Brighton Center); and its senior partner, Captain Jonathan Winship, had become one of the state's leading horticulturalists, a founding member of the Mass Horticultural Society in 1829, and that organization's First Vice President from 1835 until 1847, the year of his death. The Winship brothers resided in this house which stood on the site of now **vacant Abbey Medical building** at Market and Faneuil Streets. Captain Jonathan's son, the historian J.P.C. Winship, provided a detailed description of Winship Gardens in his turn-of-the-century work, *Historical Brighton*.

"There were three avenues through Winship Gardens from North Beacon Street to the Depot - one directly behind the old residence shaded by trees, the second along Market Street between borders of plants, and the third by a field of rose bushes. The latter led to a bridge over the railroad which with another at the westerly part of the nursery connected the ground.

On the grounds were several arbors where visitors and passengers by the railroad could rest. One of them was an expensive affair. It was called the Moss House and was adorned with many articles from China, including birds, animals, and reptiles. It was burned by sparks from an engine. Between Market Street and the first bride alluded to, the grounds were terraced and very carefully adorned with flowering plants and shrubs.

The Conservatory in Winships Gardens 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 Chinaware 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 seeds and storing buds."

In a day when travel was difficult and time-consuming, Winship Gardens, which could be reached conveniently by railroad or highway was a favorite destination of pleasure-seeking Bostonians. On May Day, when tradition called for an exchange of flowers, the family business sold 300 to 500 bouquets, according to JP.C. Winship.

It was in Winship Gardens, on April 4, 1834, that a large group of residents gathered to welcome the first train of the recently completed Boston & Worcester Railroad. Mrs. Merwin noted of this event: "I was on the bridge in Winship's Gardens and saw the first locomotive that passed over the road with passengers. It had a single car containing the officers who were making a trial trip as far as the road was finished, to West Newton." The building of the B&W through

Brighton marked the successful culmination of a long struggle to solidify Brighton's hold on the cattle trade. Since the railroad encouraged the shipping of livestock to Brighton by setting low rates for cattle, sheep, hogs and cows, its construction proved highly beneficial to the local economy. But the route proved equally beneficial the Boston & Worcester corporation. In the early years receipts at the Brighton Station in Winship Gardens, exceeded those of any other depot on the line, including the Boston and Worcester depots. An increasing volume of traffic in livestock (somewhat disturbing, no doubt, to the nurseries upper class patrons) forced the relocation of the depot to the opposite side of Market Street, where it continued until the 1960s.

The construction of the new highways, and especially of the railroad into North Brighton, generated rapid development in that quarter of the town in the 1830s. In the ten years that followed construction of the Mill Dam Road extension and Western Avenue, Mrs. Merwin wrote "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." The intersection of Market Street and Western Avenue soon acquired the name "Brighton Corners." I have already mentioned the Taft Tavern in connection with this emerging neighborhood.

The next horticultural business to be established in Brighton was Nonantum Vale Gardens, founded in the early 1820s by J.L.L.F. Warren. This nursery was situated at the southwest corner of Lake and Washington Streets. When he first established his nursery on a corner of his father's property, Warren was only fifteen years old. His father, incidentally, was the tart-tongued Joseph Warren, the First Church sexton mentioned earlier. The elder Warren's carpenter's shop was located on Washington Street opposite the present Rogers Park; his residence stood atop Nonantum Hill on the site of the Cenacle Convent. At some point, probably in the 1830s, he built a house for his horticulturalist, a building which still stands on Lake Street opposite Rogers Park Avenue intersection. Young Warren was a highly talented horticulturalist won a prize from the Boston Horticultural Society in 1838 for raising the first tomatoes in Massachusetts. Tomato growing became common only in the mid-nineteenth century owing to the widespread belief that the inoffensive vegetable was poisonous. According to J.P.C. Winship, the visitor's record book of Nonantum Vale Gardens contained the signatures of such notables as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, William Cullen Bryant and Wendell Phillips, among others. It is fascinating to think of these famous Americans visiting Mr. Warren's nursery in Brighton to admire his tomatoes. One must remember, however, that interest in matters agricultural was pervasive in this period and that horticulture was among the prestigious of occupation of occupations. Daniel Webster, for example, was an enthusiastic horticulturalist who devoted almost as much time to managing his estate in Marshfield as he did to affairs of state. Winship tells us that J.L.L.F. Warren and the poet Bryant were intimate friends for over half a century, and that they travelled together in Europe in the 1840s. Warren, incidentally, emigrated to California in the late 1840s, where he continued his distinguished career as a horticulturalist and agriculturalist.

The third and last of Brighton's pioneer horticultural establishments was that of Joseph Breck. In 1836, the same year that he established the agricultural supply house which still exists under the name the Breck Seed Company, Joseph Breck moved to a 28-acre property at the corner of Washington and Allston Streets in Brighton, a short distance from the Brookline boundary. On this land the noted horticulturalist---author of several books handbooks and editor of *The New England Farmer*-- raised a wide variety of vegetables and flowers. Nearly twenty years later Breck moved his nursery to Oak Square, but in the thirties Breck Gardens was located at the opposite and more accessible end of Brighton.

The town meeting form of government that existed in Brighton in the 1830s permitted broad participation by the male citizenry. In a typical year the town filled 50 to 60 elective positions. The socially prominent and economically more successful residents were elected to such posts as Town Moderator, Selectman, Collector, Treasurer, Assessor, School Committeeman, and State Representative, while such relatively minor posts as Fire Warden, Fence Viewer, Hogreeve, Surveyor of Lumber, and Surveyor of Highways went to the less affluent segment of the population. Brighton's town government was dominated by an elite. Deference to the socially prominent had long been a pattern of behavior in small towns, but the men who constituted this elite were not necessarily members of the old propertied families: they were now more often prosperous businessmen, who were sometimes relatively new to the community. The lawyer Abraham Edwards, for example, a man in his thirties, was elected to a succession of important town offices in the 1830-32 period despite his having lived in the town for a very short period. The most important political figure in Brighton in the 1830s was Francis Winship, who at one time or another held the posts of Moderator, Selectmen, State Representative, delegate to the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention, and State Senator. As part-owner of Winship's Gardens, he fits the business- elite profile. Other members of this dominant group included Edmund Rice, North Brighton tavern keeper and market gardener, Edward Sparhawk, President of the Bank of Brighton and Treasurer of the Cattle Fair Hotel Corporation; Henry H. Learned, a prosperous merchant; and Cephas Brackett, a major real estate speculator who owned a paper mill in Watertown.

Of the old landed aristocracy, the single most influential figure was unquestionably Gorham Parsons, nephew of Massachusetts Chief Justice Theophilus Parsons, the sole heir to a "princely fortune," according to Winship. Parsons played a role in bringing both the Mass Society for the Promotion of Agriculture and the Boston & Worcester Railroad to Brighton and is credited by Winship with keeping the railroad out of the center of the town. Parsons' estate, Oakland Farms, which was situated on the south side of Faneuil Street east of the present-day Garfield School, and which extending back all the way to Washington Street west of Brighton Center, was one of the great showpiece country estates of the period. The present Parsons Street and Oakland Street cross the property. Winship described Oakland Farms as follows: "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." Mrs. Merwin commented of the

estate: "Now you have come to the beautiful grounds and home of Gorham Parsons.... What nice gravel walks. What pretty bridges over the water where we used to stand and feed the ducks swimming in the pond. Mr. Parsons's woods was a great place to go for nuts in the fall."

By the 1830s, however, Parsons, who was in sixties, had largely withdrawn from town affairs. The sole exception came in 1835 when, with his nephew by marriage, Dr. James Whittemore he initiated a call for a special town meeting and persuaded the electors of Brighton to unanimously approve a resolution condemning the abolitionist movement: "The meeting was addressed by Gorham Parsons, Esq. and others," the town records noted, "when it was moved that a committee of three be chosen by nomination at large to draft resolutions adapted to the object of the meeting, and to report thereon forthwith." The committee of three consisted of Parsons, Whittemore and Charles Heard, the Brighton Center storekeeper, a man very much on the rise at the time who would serve as State Representative in both 1838 and 39. The resulting resolutions condemned the abolitionists for attacking slavery and thereby threatening the "dissolution of our happy union" with the southern states. They went on to declare the town's "abhorrence of any interference lending to affect in the least degree the interests of the slaveholding states, or that may produce any excitement among the slaves, or that in any way or manner shall cause any alarm on the part of the owners of such slaves," as well as the town's confidence that such agitation worked to no one's advantage, not even the slaves. Antislavery sentiment would grow in the North in future years, but in the 1830s the abolitionists were still a tiny, despised minority, even in New England, a region that would eventually become their principal stronghold. Brighton's action in adopting these pro-slavery resolutions, incidentally, was duplicated in many communities in the North in the mid-1830s. I find it mildly surprising nonetheless that no one in Brighton rose to defend the abolitionist movement, not even the aged Dr. Noah Worcester, an avowed antislavery man. Another potential dissenter was Converse Francis, a former baker from Medford, recently retired to Brighton, who was the father of one of the leading figures in the New England antislavery movement, Lydia Maria Child.

Town officers were elected in early March of each year at an annual town meeting. Sometimes, however, a single session proved inadequate, and the electors were obliged to gather a second or even a third time to complete their business. A second town meeting would come later in each year for the purpose of voting in county, state or national elections, but town business was also transacted on such occasions. Occasionally, a special or emergency meeting would be called, but generally the town meeting seasons were the spring and fall. The electors gathered at the town house, the old 1744 church building on the site of the Elks Hall (326 Washington St) in Brighton Center. A well-attended town meeting might attract as many as 150 to 200 voters, but meetings were sometimes very poorly attended, the only obstacle to universal male suffrage was a \$2 poll tax---but that seemingly modest sum was the equivalent of two full days wages for a common laborer in the 1830s, and no doubt discouraged the participation of poorer residents.

Politically, Brighton was a Whig stronghold in the 1830s. Typically Whig candidates for Governor and Congress outpolled their Democratic rivals in the order of two to one. My reading of the Brighton town records convinces me that the leaders of Brighton orchestrated these town meetings---that they reached their decisions in private meetings in advance of the public gatherings. Brighton Town Meetings were pretty tame affairs---involving relatively little contest or controversy. In the entire decade of the 1830s only two issues led to a serious breach of the civic harmony. Both arose in 1838. The first source of discord was the question of who owned the town house---the town government or the Unitarian Church. This issue was settled amicably, however, after several months of delicate negotiations. More disruptive by far was a controversy involving the unlikely issue of how many public auctioneers Brighton should have, and how these officers should be chosen. The record of this incident stands in such sharp contrast to the usual harmony of town meetings own meetings, that it warrants a full quotation. The protagonists were State Senator Francis Winship, on the one side, and Emery Rice and Nathan Carruth, on the other, Of Nathan Carruth I can tell you nothing. Emery Rice was described by J.C.P. Winship as a man of strong opinions: a man who "argued well and interestingly with many people of various beliefs but (whose) views remained unchanged."

The record of the uproarious June 11, 1838 Brighton Town Meeting reads as follows: "The article in the warrant was read relative to the appointment of an additional auctioneer, when it was moved, previous to reading the petition, that the subject be indefinitely postponed. After remarks by Hon. Francis Winship the mover withdrew his motion, and the petition was read. Hon. Francis Winship addressed the meeting in favor of the petition, Messrs.. Emery Rice and Carruth against it. A motion was then made that the subject be indefinitely postponed. The motion was put and declared by the Moderator to be in favor of indefinite postponement. The vote was doubted, and on polling the house the Moderator decided the vote in the affirmative, sixty-four voting for indefinite postponement and fifty-three against it. Much excitement prevailed. A motion was made to reconsider the vote by a person who voted in the negative. A question of order then arose, pending which it was moved and seconded to dissolve the meeting. A motion was put and declared in the affirmative, doubted, again put, but not declared, when it was again voted to poll the house, and declared by the Moderator as follows: sixty-four for dissolving the meeting and forty-five against it, and the Moderator declared the meeting to be dissolved."

The most important functions performed by local government in these years, judging from the amounts expended by the town, were (1) the construction and maintenance of roads; and (2) the provision of public education. In 1832, for example, the town appropriated \$2,700 to meet all of its expenses for the year. Of that amount, \$900 (one third) was earmarked for the schools and \$900 (another third) for roads. As the population of the town increased, it was obliged to build additional schoolhouses in outlying districts. Brighton had established a School Committee in 1822 to handle the anticipated expansion. There was a "juvenile" school and four district schoolhouses in the town by the mid- 1830s. The central school, dating from 1722, housed both a "juvenile" of grammar school and a primary school, and operated out of the second floor of the



Town House in Brighton Center; the Oak Square School, established in 1825, sat under the Great White Oak on the green at Oak Square; the eastern school, established in 1832, stood on Cambridge Street near the present Gordon Street intersection; and the northern school, dating from 1836, stood on the site of the present Storrow School Apartments on Waverly Street in North Brighton. In 1839, there were 321 students in the system. The per capita expenditure per student in that year was \$3.11.

Brighton did not acquire a high school, incidentally, until 1841. Josiah Rutter, Chairman of the Brighton School Committee, established a private school or academy on Academy Hill in 1839, which the town purchased in 1841 for conversion to a high school. Brighton was not especially laggard in this regard; quite the contrary. The first high school in the United States---English High---was only 20 years old when Brighton took this step. Brighton High is, in fact, one of the oldest high schools in the United States, as well as the second oldest surviving high school in Boston. Many ordinary taxpayers opposed to establishment of high schools, viewing them as upper class, business-preparatory or college-preparatory institutions, facilities their own children would never use. They were understandably reluctant to assume the expense of educating the sons and daughters of the well-to-do. There were many fine private academies available for rich men's sons.

School attendance was a major problem in the 1830s. The Massachusetts Compulsory School Attendance Law was not enacted until 1857. For most children schooling was irregular. Winter sessions were generally better attended than summer sessions. Parents relied heavily on child labor; farmers could more easily dispense with the services of their children in the winter than during the growing season. The average attendance at Brighton's central schoolhouse in the winter of 1839 was 50; the following summer, however, it dropped to 25.

Brighton appropriated fairly large sums to the support of its schools in the thirties; it continued doing so throughout the ante-bellum period. The state began compiling statistics on per capita school expenditure in 1841: by 1842 Brighton ranked first among the towns of Massachusetts in the amount of money appropriated to schools per capita, and generally ranked among the top 25 into the 1860s. However, it was only in the early 1840s that the town finally discontinued the practice of charging parents a modest fee for their children's schooling.

The townspeople kept a close watch on the schools. In the 1838-39 school year, for example, the School Committee paid 17 visits to the district schoolhouses to observe teachers and students. The next year, 1839-40, these "visitations rose to 40. In addition to a central 5-member School Committee, which had overall responsibility for school finances, curriculum, and teacher evaluation, each schoolhouse district elected a Prudential Committee with the power to hire the teacher for its own school. Confused lines of authority sometimes led to conflict. "Too often, it is feared," the School Committees 1839-40 report noted, "is the office of Prudential Committee accepted for the purpose of bestowing the important trust of an instructor of our children upon someone having a claim on the agent, by affinity or otherwise, without any regard for the

interests of the district." Teachers thus came under the authority both of the School Committee and Prudential Committee, which placed them in a singularly awkward and dangerous position. Teaching was a hard row in the 1830s. Also, there were no graded schools anywhere in the United States in the 1830s. The first such facility, Boston's Quincy School, was established in the 1850s. District school teachers were accordingly obliged to deal with students of every age and level of preparation in a single classroom, with class sizes of 50, 60 or 70 students a commonplace. Moreover, age had little to do with level of accomplishment in this period. Since parents sent their children to school as it suited them, the amount a child learned was a function of his or her family's economic status rather than of age. Thus an eight-year-old and a sixteen year old might well be at a comparable educational level. It is easy to understand why chaos reigned in many district schoolhouses, and why teachers were obliged to rely so heavily on corporal punishment to preserve discipline.

However, the 1830s was a period of increasing concern for public education throughout the New England region; the so-called Common School Movement, associated with such educational reformers as James Carter, Horace Mann and Henry Barnard, was just getting underway. The concern for a more consistent and professional educational preparation stemmed from growing anxiety about the future of American society---an anxiety fueled by the rise of industry and cities and by a weakening of many traditional relationships and institutions. The movement scored its greatest successes in the more urbanized centers of New England. Brighton's ready response to the Common School Movement testifies to the town's relatively urbanized outlook.

It was a source of great satisfaction to the members of the 1839-40 School Committee, that the amount of tuition paid by residents of Brighton to private schools had declined from \$900 to \$650 over the previous year. The aim of the common school men was to replace private with public education. To accomplish that objective, they had first to persuade the public that the town's schools offered their children more than private institutions. Thus, when the town acquired a supply of new equipment for its schools in 1839 that included pneumatic apparatus, chemicals, an orrery, a tellerium, 3 globes, 4 thermometers, and 4 state maps, the items were placed on display in the Town Hall, and the public invited to examine them. "The full attendance on this occasion," the School Committee Annual Report noted. "was as gratifying to the Committee, as honorable to the inhabitants of the place.

Another issue which was important in many Massachusetts towns in the 1830s was temperance---the movement to prohibit the retail sale of liquor. One historian cites Brighton specifically as a major battleground of the liquor issue. The Brighton town records, however, fail to support that assertion. As an important commercial town, it seems unlikely that Brighton would have been a strong temperance town. When Massachusetts enacted statewide prohibition in 1838 it no doubt did some damage to the local hotel and tavern trade. It is suggestive that Zachariah Porter, the manager of the Cattle Fair Hotel, left Brighton in the same year to take up a new career in North Cambridge. The 1838 law, incidentally, was easily circumvented; violations of the statute became so common, in fact, that it was quickly repealed. Among the most original

schemes for getting around the letter of the temperance statute was that employed by a liquor dealer who painted stripes on a pig and advertised that a person could view this natural wonder for six cents, along, of course, with a complimentary glass of whiskey.

Whatever may have been the case in other towns in the 1830s, Brighton does not seem to have been a political battleground. Another example of the absence of controversy in Brighton: In a history of the Bethesda Lodge, Brighton's masonic chapter--a history written in 1894---we are told that the lodge was forced to go underground in 1832 by a rising tide of anti-Masonic sentiment. Antimasonry was a powerful political movement of the late 1820s and 1830s. Claiming that the order enjoyed special privileges and power in government, business and the courts, its enemies urged exclusion of Masons from all positions of trust. To quote from the Bethesda Lodge history: "No relation of family or friend was a barrier to (the antimasonic hysteria). Not only were teachers or pastors driven from their stations, but children of Masons were driven from their Schools and members from their Churches. The sacraments were refused to Masons. Families were divided, brothers were arrayed against brothers, fathers against sons, and even the wife against husband. Desperate efforts were made to take chartered rights away from the Masonic Corporation and to pass laws that should prevent Masons from meeting and performing their ceremonies." Although such conditions may have existed elsewhere, there is no evidence whatever to suggest that such hysteria prevailed in the Town of Brighton. Indeed, the principal leaders of the Bethesda Lodge were among the most respected leaders of the community---men like Edward Sparhawk, Joseph Warren and Ebenezer Fuller---men regularly chosen for important town offices throughout the decade of the 1830s.

What can we say of Brighton in the 1830s by way of summary? The town was prosperous. It contained a superior transportation system and a unique mixture of industries---the Cattle Market, the slaughtering industry, commercial nurseries and market gardening. By the late 1830s, Brighton boasted one of the finest school systems in the state and was preparing to build a new town hall and to establish a high school. It was a town on the rise. Its leaders were men of affairs---trusted landowners and businessman. There is little evidence in the historical record of a disposition to challenge these leaders. And therein, I would suggest, lies the seeds of future tragedy; for in surrendering the control of local government to a self-confident business elite the people of Brighton were laying the groundwork for the fateful events of 1870-73 that robbed the community irrevocably of local self-determination.