

A Social Portrayal

T H E R I S E

and F A L L

of H Y D E P A R K

1868 - 1912

As an Incorporated

Massachusetts Town

By John P. Thomson  
Hyde Park, Massachusetts

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~~148 Arlington St.  
Hyde Park, Mass~~

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Prof. Wallace P. Bishop  
Graduate School of Arts  
and Sciences  
Northeastern University

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## Early Settlement in Hyde Park

Members of the Massadchuseuck branch of the Algonquin Indians roamed what is now the Hyde Park district of Boston ~~at the time~~ when the first white settlers arrived. The Neponset River which winds through Hyde Park was named for the local Indian residents.

The earliest known dwelling constructed by a white man was erected by Robert Stanton in 1668 near the boundary of the Tileston and Hollingsworth Paper Mill, founded in 1801 and ~~still in business~~ <sup>now closed</sup> on ~~River Street~~. Before Hyde Park became an independent town, portions were in Dedham, Dorchester and Milton, some of whose residents strongly opposed losing the community.<sup>1</sup>

In the first half of the 19th century, woodland, farms and estates occupied most of what is now Hyde Park. Edward Jones of Dedham farmed 100 acres, which extended from the Neponset River to the Muddy Pond Woods. His daughter wrote "there we had currant bushes, plum trees, peach trees, cherry trees, and in a little place set apart our flower beds. What is now Webster Street used to be our land, as we called it, where each evening the cows were driven up from the pasture on the way to the barn...."<sup>2</sup> About 1855 Mr. Jones' heirs sold the farm to the Hyde Park Land Company. The drastic growth of real estate values is illustrated by comparing the \$1,250 paid in 1854 for a cottage built by ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> Jones on one acre of land, to \$19,000 paid in 1893 for the land without the dwelling.

Speculation in real estate and anticipation of future industrial

development and profits activated the first organized move that led to a Town of Hyde Park. Twenty Boston businessmen, real estate men, lawyers, artisans, a teacher and others formed in 1855 ~~the~~ The Twenty Associates. Organizer and moving spirit was Alpheus P. Blake, deputy collector of internal revenue, president of the Revere Beach Railroad, and original organizer of the Boston Land Company. Except for one man with a mustache, the Associates wore carefully trimmed beards and thick sideburns. With Mr. Blake, they were William E. Abbott, Amos S. Angell, Ira L. Benton, Enoch E. Blake, John N. Brown, George W. Currier, Hypolitus C. Fisk, John C. French, William E. French, David Higgins, John S. Hobbs, Samuel S. Mooney, William H. Nightingale, J. Wentworth Payson, Dwight B. Rich, Alphonso J. Robinson, William H. Seavey, Daniel Warren and John Williams.<sup>3</sup>

In the fall of 1855, the group went by train from Boston to the land located between Neponset River and Brush Hill Road. Partly pasture, much of the land was covered with pines, white birches, some cedars, walnut trees and high bush blueberries. A favorable reaction resulted in the formal creation of "The Twenty Associates," who took deeds to a 100 acre tract on Nov. 23, 1855 from farmers Nathan and Timothy Tucker. The foundation for the first house was laid in May, 1856 and by January, 1857, 20 houses were erected. Each house occupied 35,000 square feet of land, with 137 foot frontages and 250 foot depths. Most of the Associates took possession of their houses in the Fairmount section. Other parcels of land were sold. The nearest store was in Mattapan. The nearest train was at Kenney's Bridge on the Boston and Providence Railroad and the ~~nearest~~ <sup>closest</sup> post offices were in Milton and East Dedham.

Among the prominent early residents was Henry Grew, who purchased several acres and moved to "Dorchester" in May, 1847 to settle with his family on the Grew Estate, long one of the beauties of Hyde Park. Today its once wooded acres are filled with small houses and a golf course. Mr. Grew's son, Henry Sturgis Grew, also played a substantial role in the affairs of Hyde Park after he made his fortune in the China trade. A grandson of the senior Grew, Joseph Clark Grew, enjoyed a distinguished career as a diplomat and was ambassador to Japan from 1932 to 1947.<sup>4</sup>

By the close of the Civil War in 1865, the growth of Hyde Park was rapid. Where a town soon was to arise, hundreds of houses were erected, factories sprang up, mills expanded employment, churches and stores appeared, and railroad service increased. In 1867, 106 dwellings were erected and the price of lots trebled and quadrupled in value within a few weeks. The Readville section of what became Hyde Park achieved state-wide fame during the Civil War as the site of the busiest center for drilling Union soldiers--at Camp Meigs, which at the end of the war was a hospital camp. Many years later the site was christened "Camp Meigs Memorial Park." (July 4, 1903)<sup>5</sup>

#### Founding of the Town

Edmund Davis, lawyer and a contemporary Hyde Park historian, noted that:

One of the leading motives which caused the mass of the residents of Hyde Park to respond so warmly to the project of incorporation had been the feeling that their needs had not received sufficient attention from the parent towns of Dedham, Dorchester and Milton. Other incentives which spurred early Hyde Parkers to create their own community were the water power of the Neponset River and Mother Brook; and the high level of railroad transportation.<sup>6</sup>

Slightly more than 4,000 persons occupied 460 dwellings in the new town, which contained 2,800 acres carved from Dorchester, 1,300, Dedham, 800, and Milton, 700. When the Massachusetts General Court worked out the legislative details, on April 22, 1868, Gov. Alexander H. Bullock affixed his signature to the town's incorporation statute. For 44 years, Hyde Park was destined to <sup>be</sup> ~~be~~ a thriving residential, cultural, commercial and industrial community. By 1888 there were 9,000 inhabitants. When Hyde Park joined the City of Boston in 1912, the population had grown to 15,507.<sup>7</sup>

The name Hyde Park came from the Rev. Henry Lyman, <sup>ANGLICAN</sup> ~~an~~ English born Congregational minister who preached in the new community. The first town hall, called the "Music Hall," arrived in Hyde Park in sections from Boston. "Here we held our town meetings, some of which were indeed phenomenal. It is to be doubted if any other town ever quite produced the like...The oratory was <sup>SOME</sup> ~~some~~ sometimes quite overpowering. No cradle of liberty was ever rocked with more earnest utterances."<sup>8</sup>

On April 30, 1868, the first Hyde Park Town Meeting was held in Music Hall. After a spirited contest, new town officials elected were Henry Grew, Zenas Allen, William J. Stuart, Martin L. Witcher, and Benjamin F. Radford, who bore the ponderous titles of Selectmen, Surveyors of Highways, Overseers of the Poor, and Assessors.<sup>9</sup> During its first year the new town had four schools, six religious societies but only three church buildings, a cotton mill, a paper mill, a vise factory and iron works, a woolen mill, railroad shops and a needle factory.

Prominent Pioneer Citizens

A prominent member of the first Hyde Park Board of Selectman was Zenas Allen, descended from Puritan stock. Born in 1805, Mr. Allen in his early years worked at carpentry, paper hanging and farming. From 1853 to 1854, he sat in the Massachusetts General Court and was a Whig until the formation of the Republican Party. Mr. Allen moved to Hyde Park in 1866, built a house on Walnut Street and was employed by the Hyde Park Woolen Co. "Mr. Allen was much interested in the welfare of Hyde Park; his advice was often sought and his judgment greatly respected by his fellow citizens."<sup>10</sup> Twice married, he was a deacon of the Congregational Church and a charter member of the Hyde Park Historical Society at the time of his death in 1887.

Another example of an outstanding Hyde Park pioneer was Martin Luther Whitcher, also on the first selectman's board. A stone mason and contractor, "he was an active, prominent factor in all efforts having for their object the healthy growth of good government." As a young man ~~he~~ favored the anti-slavery movement and espoused temperance reform. Mr. Whitcher was a member of the Hyde Park School Committee, an original director of the Hyde Park Savings Bank, and a loyal member of the Methodist Episcopal Church. At his death in 1875, he was eulogized as "most emphatically a self-made man--a natural mechanic." 11

Self-made men such as Allen, Grew and Whitcher had their work cut out as officials of the new town. School accommodations were woefully inadequate. Most of the streets had been constructed by adjacent owners and were of different widths, ungraded and in many instances full of obstructions. Few of the streets were lighted

and most of these were privately lighted. There was no fire or police department.

To remedy all these deficiencies, and numberless others, the citizens had asked for and obtained self-government. Many thoughtlessly expected that it would prove an immediate panacea for ~~all~~ their disabilities. So it will be well believed that for the first few years, the town officers had no easy time of it. 12 all

#### Town Government, Public Utilities

Early streets were River, West, Back and Milton. Prior to the founding of Hyde Park, many new streets were determined by the character of the land <sup>and</sup> the railroad rights of way. "The railroads present an almost insuperable barrier for new street crossings and the direction of travel and transportation to and from Boston is the same as that of the railroads." 13 After the incorporation of Hyde ~~Park~~ <sup>PARK</sup>, many miles of streets were accepted, graded, widened or relocated. Bridges were built or extensively repaired. The principal thoroughfares and still so today became Hyde Park Avenue and River Street, both about five miles in length. Until the advent of the automobile and bicycles in the late 19th century, horses were the main sources of local transportation power as they pulled carriages, buggies and wagons through Hyde Park's streets.

Gas lights illuminated Hyde Park's streets until January, 1888, when the first 75 electric street lamps were <sup>turned</sup> turned on by the American Electric Manufacturing Co. Holder of a three year contract with the town, the firm provided lights only until midnight, 20 nights each month. Several years later, with the organization of the Hyde Park Electric Co., streets were lighted all night and every night. 14

Within a few years of the town's founding, municipal officials and employees increased considerably. By 1874 Hyde Park had a town clerk, a treasurer, a tax collector, a six member School Committee, a nine member library board, a trial justice, five police officers, seven constables, and six justices of the peace. Other municipal workers were a sealer of weights and measures, two surveyors of lumber, two measurers of wood and bark, a pound keeper, three fence viewers, a lamplighter and two field drivers. The fire department in 1874 consisted of four companies. <sup>15</sup> Francis E. Boyd was the chief engineer of the Hyde Park Fire Department, which included the Goddwill Fire Engine Company, the Rough and Ready Steam Fire Engine Company, the Splicer Hose Company and the Norfolk Hook and Ladder Company. A chemical engine was added in 1881. The 12th annual report for the Town of Hyde Park in 1879 <sup>f</sup> listed five dwelling fires, a blaze in a hair factory, a barn fire, a hay stack fire and several brush fires.

That same annual report disclosed the payment of \$488 to the Globe Gas Light Co. for ~~lighting~~ street lamps," \$20 to J.H. Nay for damage to a horse and carriage; and \$30.63 to A. Raymond for the use of teams. The Overseers of the Poor approved payment of \$8 to Sarah A. Lovell for boarding poor children<sup>N</sup>, \$109.36 to Charles L. Farnsworth for <sup>bread and</sup> ~~bread~~ crackers for the poor; and \$1.08 to M.M. Donlan, milk for the poor. The town fathers also approved \$225 as a tax exemption for land owned by Harvard College.<sup>16</sup>

"The need for a public water supply was thought to <sup>be</sup> ~~be~~ quite pressing and had been made the subject of much discussion in town meetings and in private, until in 1884 the town having then taken no action," several local businessmen obtained a charter to establish

the Hyde Park Water Co. in 1884. The company began pumping water to consumers in 1885 and within eight years the town had 134 artesian wells, a 500,000 gallon standpipe, 26 miles of cast-iron mains, for some 1,500 service connections. 17 In Hyde Park's last years as an incorporated town, dissatisfaction by residents over water rates and service was among the reasons why voters elected to join up with Boston.

### Educational Progress

Still standing in Hyde Park on River Street is a one-story, single family house that once was the Butler School, constructed in 1804 on land formerly in Dorchester. At Butler, as in other early 19th century schools, the custom was for male teachers during the winter term and female teachers during the summer session. Built to house 60 pupils, the school cost \$<sup>7</sup>72.86 including desks, seats, and fencing. A friend donated a stove, which kept the teachers and pupils warm for 30 years. 18

As the area now occupied by Hyde Park become more settled, an 1860 report complained that the Butler School was inadequate and that the hall was being ~~used~~<sup>used</sup> for a schoolroom. "The furniture, though good for the day, is not of the most approved style. There is no playground, except the public street...." 19

When Hyde Park became a town in 1868, four public grammar schools enrolled 547 children, ages 5 to 15, but no high school existed within the town limits. A School Committee soon was organized and among its earliest members were abolitionist Theodore D. Weld, H.M. Cable, Rev. Amos Webster, Rev. Perley B. Davis, R.W. Husted, and the Rev. William J. Corcoran. By 1893, these were ~~the~~<sup>the</sup> public

schools and their locations: High School, Everett Street; grammar schools, Damon School, Readville; Fairmount School, Williams Avenue; Greenwood School, Metropolitan Avenue; Grew School, Gordon Avenue; and Butler School, East River Street, (BUILDING STILL STANDING).

The origin of Hyde Park High School can be traced to a warrant in the Town Meeting of April 3, 1869, which read "Will the town authorize the school committee to make arrangements with C.M. Barrows for furnishing instruction to such scholars as are prepared for the same." The warrant was approved and Mr. Barrows instructed 10 students at ~~cost~~<sup>A cost</sup> of \$292.50. <sup>20</sup> In the fall of 1869 the Town Meeting <sup>or</sup> authorized the School Committee "to establish a high school, employ a competent teacher therefor, and furnish the ~~necessary~~<sup>necessary</sup> room." High school <sup>S</sup> students then were assigned to the Fairmount School, in charge of George M. Fellows, the first master of Hyde Park High School. For many <sup>years</sup> ~~years~~, high school classes continued in various elementary buildings until in 1902, a new brick structure opened on Everett Street to accommodate 320 students with a capacity of 500. Hyde Park High School remained on Everett Street until 1928 when a larger building was opened on Metropolitan Avenue. The growth of Hyde Park's high school population is shown by these figures: 1869, 16; 1879, 64; 1884, 108; 1890, 169; 1900, 275; 1902, 320. 21

Not until 1873 did the School Committee vote to grant high school diplomas. The first diplomas, awarded Nov. 5, 1873, went to George W. Rollins, '72, and to Agnes L. Adams and Carrie E. Walker, both '73. Mr. Rollins was graduated from Yale University and ~~became~~<sup>became</sup> a master at Boston Latin School. Notable graduates have been Henry R. Chamberlain '76, writer, reporter and editor for the "New York Sun" and the "Boston Journal;" and Arthur Vining Davis '83, an Amherst

College graduate who later became chairman of the board of the Aluminum Company of America.<sup>22</sup>

A striking example of problems facing school officials and teachers in 19th century Hyde Park is this extract from the "Rules ~~and~~ Regulations" furnished each teacher:

Subject: Punishments: All teachers shall aim at such discipline in their schools as would be exercised by a kind, judicious parent in his family, avoiding corporal punishment in all cases where good order can be preserved by milder measures. Corporal punishment shall be inflicted only after the nature of the offence has been fully explained to the scholar; and shall be restricted to blows on the hand with a rattan; but if any pupil refuses to submit to this, some other proper punishment may be used. <sup>23</sup>

By the 1880's the increased number of Catholic families in Hyde Park resulted in the opening of St. Raphael's School on <sup>Sept.</sup> ~~Sept.~~ 10, 1888. The Sisters of Charity of Nazareth did the teaching for 450 pupils, including those attending a branch parochial school in the Readville section. Sister Mary Ignatius, superior from 1891 to 1912, has been cited as "largely responsible for St. Raphael's pioneering in educational methods." St. Raphael's later became the Most Precious Blood School in a new building.<sup>24</sup>

#### Many Churches in Hyde Park

The first religious meetings in Hyde <sup>Park</sup> ~~Park~~, including a Sunday School union class, are believed to have been held at the Fairmount home of Alpheus P. Blake, a founder of the town. A Dedham Baptist minister, Rev. William C. Patterson, established the community's first preaching service at the Blake home. Formal organization of the Baptists came in 1858.<sup>25</sup> Other Protestant denominations followed suit in rapid fashion. The Congregationalists organized in the 1860's and dedicated ~~the~~ <sup>their</sup> building in October, 1868. The First

Baptist Church building was completed in 1870, by 1874 the Methodist Episcopal Church was occupied and in 1875 Theodore D. Weld served as president of the First Unitarian Church which initiated services in a new building. As Hyde Park's population increased, additional Protestant churches and religious societies opened, such as Christ Church Episcopal, the Advent Society, the Universalist Church, the Blue Hill ~~Chapel~~<sup>Chapel</sup>, and the Clarendon Congregational Church. The arrival of the 20th century saw the establishment of a Christian Science group and the Presbyterians ~~and~~ organized in Hyde Park.<sup>26</sup>

Illustrative of the growth of Hyde Park's Protestant denominations is a brief sketch of the history of the First Baptist Church. During the summer of 1854 or 1855, a neighborhood Sunday School met Sunday evenings at the Butler School as the first such group in the present limits of Hyde Park. The Baptists held their first prayer meeting in 1857 at the home of David Higgins. Visiting ministers preached from time to time at private homes. Formal organization of the first church in the future Hyde Park came as Baptists met Sept. 23, 1858 at the home of L.B. Hanaford, first superintendent of the Sunday School. The first worship service was held in Fairmount Hall in the fall of 1858. For several years the church depended on the Massachusetts Baptist State Convention for visiting ministers, at a charge of \$1.00 per Sunday. In 1862 the Baptists constructed a chapel on a lot on Fairmount Avenue, where a church building was completed in 1870. The first regular Baptist minister in Hyde Park was Rev. George R. Darrow, who served only six months after being named in 1864.<sup>27</sup>

With the expansion of Hyde Park as an industrial and manufacturing center and the arrival of immigrants from Ireland and other

European lands, many Catholics began to buy or rent homes in the new Massachusetts town. Father Thomas McNulty of St. Gregory's Church in Dorchester organized the first Catholic congregation in the Hyde Park district and for several years celebrated mass in Music Hall at Everett Square. As early as 1868, the Catholic diocese purchased a lot on Hyde Park Avenue at Webster Street. The first resident Catholic pastor, Rev. William J. Corcoran, came in 1870 to Hyde Park, where he served on the newly organized School Committee. Father Corcoran achieved the construction of the town's first Catholic place of worship, the Church of the Epiphany of the Redeemer. <sup>PIRE</sup> A ~~fire~~ destroyed the building in 1875 and the struggling new parish had to wait until 1880 for a new structure, built on a new site at Maple and Oak Streets. The cornerstone was laid on July 4, 1880. Dedicated in 1885 as the Church of the Most Precious Blood, the church has a lofty spire that rises 162 feet over Mount Neponset. One of the most revered and respected pastors was Father (later <sup>Mon. 1900</sup> ~~Mon. 1900~~) James J. Chittick, who served in Hyde Park from 1888 to 1919.<sup>28</sup>

#### Multiplying Organizations

Numerous social, fraternal, political and other organizations sprang up within a few years after Hyde Park's birth in 1868. A promotional brochure for a railroad cited the town's convenient 8.2 mile distance from the center of Boston, the many fine residences, and described the majority of people as middle class, few very rich, none very poor, "just the class of people that abounds in enterprise, push and all-go-ahead qualities." Particularly praised was the work of the Village Improvement Association.<sup>29</sup>

Peak organizational activity occurred during the 25 years ending in 1900. Among the most vigorous were the masonic orders, the temperance groups such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U.) and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Other busy groups were the Odd ~~FELLOWS~~<sup>FELLOWS</sup>, the Knights of Pythias, the Grand Army of the Republic, the Hyde Park Band, the Catholic Order of Foresters, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Red Men, the Ancient Order of Workmen.

Women's literary and cultural clubs abounded; one of these, the Thought Club, heard Abby Morton Diaz speak on "The Intellectual Development of Woman" in 1882. Businessmen and industrialists spent spare hours at the Waverly Club, the Hyde Park Club or the Board of Trade. Since the town leaned Republican in politics, the young men organized a Republican Club. 30

Early in the first decade of the 20th century, Hyde Park still could boast 22 clubs and societies and 38 secret and benevolent associations. Some new names turned up--the Current Events Club, the Republican ~~Town~~<sup>W</sup> Committee, the Hyde Park Anti-Saloon League, the Hyde Park Police Relief Association, the Hyde Park Veterans Firemen Association, the Hyde Park Medical Club, and the Dartmouth College Association. Labor had started to flex its collective muscles and by 1903 Hyde Park painters and carpenters had their union locals. With 1898 not far behind, the close of another war led to a local chapter of the United Spanish War Veterans, John Cleary Camp <sup>P</sup>No. 34. 31

A pioneer organization in Hyde Park--and still vigorous today--was the Young Men's Christian Association. As early as 1868, local young men informally organized a "Y." Sixteen years later a permanent association

manent association was organized and a modest building was secured in Everett Square, where 95 active and 35 associate members were enrolled. Some of the early "Y" vitality had diminished by 1897 when membership decline owing to a long-standing rule that members must belong to a Christian church, in the Protestant framework. Owing to a changing population, the Hyde Park "Y" directors revised the rule to read that "any man over 16 years, of good moral character may join on payment of dues." Officers still were required to be a member of some Christian church in Hyde Park.<sup>32</sup> Membership began to climb again. Businessmen and churches cooperated to raise \$46,000 for a new building, which was dedicated Sept. 24, 1902. The "Y" offered the latest facilities for a gymnasium, bowling alleys, reading and recreation rooms, dormitory rooms, and at the time the only YMCA swimming pool in Greater Boston. The year 1903 witnessed an active boys' and men's program and 500 members on the YMCA membership rolls.

#### Temperance Movement and Women's Suffrage

As the temperance movement swept the nation, so it played a vital role in the social structure and organizations of Hyde Park. As many as 13 temperance groups, large and small, emerged between 1873 and 1888. Perhaps the most significant and vital was the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) chapter, organized in Hyde Park April 26, 1876. The Independent Order of Good Templars formed five lodges. There were two Sons of Temperance groups. Local historian Edmund Davis described the "Temperance Association" founded in 1874, as "very successful, holding many mass meetings in the churches. The Reform Club absorbed it and intensified the

public interest in the cause of temperance."<sup>33</sup> Mr. Davis recorded that the club held weekly public meetings which often attracted overflow crowds, many of whom "were redeemed from lives of gross indulgence; many more were stopped in a downward career towards such lives; the subject of temperance and morality was brought home to every thinking mind; and the sentiment thus awakened has placed and kept this town among the foremost in opposition to the encroachments of alcohol, and in support of all restrictive measures."<sup>34</sup>

A leader in the national and international temperance movement for many years, Mrs. Mary H. Hunt resided in Hyde Park for 27 years, beginning in 1866. For 26 years she was national superintendent of the Department of Scientific Temperance Instruction for the Womens Christian Temperance Union and held a similar post with the world WCTU. A descendant of Edward Winslow, an early governor of Plymouth Colony, Mary Hunt had taught chemistry and physiology. She devoted her life to encourage and require the public schools to educate children about the evil effects of alcohol.<sup>35</sup> Her efforts were first rewarded by a pioneer temperance education law enacted in 1882 in Vermont. By 1906 Congress and all U.S. states had approved similar laws requiring schools to teach the nature and effects of alcohol and narcotics as part of physiology and hygiene courses.

In Hyde Park in 1879, the School Committee voted to adopt "Richardson's Manual" <sup>as</sup> ~~as~~ the most suitable for the study of temperance. The book was to be "placed in the hands of the teachers for use of oral lessons upon temperance." The committee specified that the book was not to be read directly by the students.<sup>36</sup>

Advocates of woman's suffrage played a disruptive role in town affairs on March 7, 1870, when they achieved national prominence by

storming the Hyde Park Town Meeting and insisting on their right to vote. Observers said that it was the first time in America that women had exercised their right to vote at a town meeting. The moderator of that ~~memorable~~ <sup>MEMORABLE</sup> meeting, novelist Sylvanus Cobb Jr., described the event in his diary:

Our annual town meeting. I was elected moderator and had a hard time of it. Late in the afternoon our female friends, who had gathered at the Everett House for the purpose of voting, came over in a body, and deposited their votes in a box prepared for them--forty seven in all. There was much excitement in the hall, which was packed, and I had great difficulty in maintaining order--but I did it. The event has created universal interest and comment--the first of the kind in the country. I have taken my stand ~~for~~ woman's suffrage, and am proud of it.<sup>37</sup>

#### Cultural and Literary Life

Rich and varied was the literary and cultural life of Hyde Park during its brief lifespan as a town. Author Cobb wrote nearly 200 novelettes and other fiction pieces, most of which were serialized in the "New York Ledger." Born in Maine, Cobb was the son of a Universalist minister, was active in the anti-slavery movement, worked for the Know-Nothing party and was active in Masonic societies. Among the founders of the Hyde Park Public Library, he also served as moderator of the Town Meeting. One of his best known stories was "Gunmaker of Moscow."<sup>38</sup>

Other outstanding literary figures who lived in Hyde Park for varying periods were Dr. William A. Mowry, teacher and historian who edited the journal of the Hyde Park Historical Society; Gen. Henry B. Carrington, once commanding officer over Gen. George Custer and writer on the American Revolution and the Indian Wars; Miss Amy



mostly short-lived, were the "Hyde Park Times," "The Independent," "The Hyde Park Herald," and "The Hyde Park Monitor." The sole daily was the "Hyde Park Daily News," established in 1896 and sold for one penny.<sup>41</sup>

Concrete evidence of the great respect directed to literary and cultural needs was the formation in 1871, only three years after Hyde Park's founding, of a committee to organize a Free Public Library. Some \$6,000 was raised as allibrary fund. Through the energetic leadership of former abolitionist Theodore D. Weld and the cooperation of many citizens, the new library opened with 3,000 volumes in March, 1874 <sup>the</sup> ~~on the~~ second floor of a brick building on West Street. Later located in another second story site, the library by ~~4~~ 1883 became crowded and inadequate for the town's 8,000 citizens. <sup>42</sup>

Enterprising citizens finally persuaded the Town Meeting to appropriate \$25,000 towards a new building, other funds were raised, and a new ~~Greek~~ <sup>Grecian</sup> Ionic structure opened on Harvard Street in September, 1899. Within a year there wer 16,000 volumes in the building, which still stands and houses the Hyde Park branch of the Boston Public Library. On the second floor is a spacious hall, named in memory of Theodore Weld who died in Hyde Park at the age of 92, in ~~the~~ year 1895.

Mr. Weld had established his place in American history ~~as one~~ <sup>as</sup> ~~the~~ leading abolitionist, many years before he moved to Hyde Park, which was shortly after the town's founding. Although approaching old age, Mr. Weld played a vigorous part in Hyde Park civic and cultural affairs. A founder of the library and of the

Unitarian Church, he was president of the Unitarian Society for 25 years. Active in Hyde Park's affairs, particularly women's rights, was Mrs. Weld, the former Angelina Grimke. Her sister, Sarah Grimke, also made her home with the Welds in Hyde Park.

At a memorial service for Mr. Weld in Hyde Park on May 22, ~~1845~~<sup>1895</sup>, William Lloyd Garrison Jr., son of another famous abolitionist, paid a final tribute: 43

*as if* The episodes in which Mr. Weld and the Grimke sisters figured were ended before my life began, and, in the days of my earliest recollection, their names and deeds were part of history. When I first saw Mr. Weld it was at the beginning of the Civil War, and his appearance upon an anti-slavery platform was alike a resurrection from the dead. It seemed ~~as if~~ the fires of war were necessary to bring him again to the rostrum, from which the loss of voice and the necessity of other occupations had so long withdrawn him. He had then the prophet's aspect and the authority of the past. *✓* My boyish eyes viewed him with awe and wonder. Then he and his ~~referred~~ wife became neighbors; a new bond established itself between his old friends, and another generation grew up to know him in a new phase and a new environment.

Several Hyde Park residents in the late <sup>19</sup>th century enriched the nation's theatrical world. Among the celebrities were child actress Olive Homans, comedian Felix Haney, operatic singer and actress Sadie Cushman, actor William Farnham, star of "Ben Hur," and Bruce Edwards, who was business manager for actress Julia Marlowe. Hyde Park citizens constructed an opera house--French's--and Waverly Hall showed top plays of the era.<sup>44</sup>

In the world of fine arts, the most renowned resident of Hyde Park was John J. Enneking. Born in Ohio, the son of a farmer of German descent, Mr. Enneking studied the rudiments of drawing at St. Mary's College in Ohio, journeyed to New York City, and then traveled to Boston. At first discouraged by the financial prospects of painting as a profession, he turned to the manufacture of tinware. 45

By this time married, he moved to Hyde Park and returned to painting. Next came travels in Europe where he studied with leading landscape artists.

Known as the "Sunset Painter," the bearded Enneking experimented with various mediums and periods, but finally became a portrayer of New England alone. He produced many impressive canvasses of mountain valleys, winter snows, Indian summers and autumn suns. Recognized for his skills as a landscape artist, Mr. Enneking drew on his knowledge of Vienna's fine park system to play a leading part in beautifying the City of Boston.<sup>46</sup> After a long fight, he succeeded in having one of his favorite sketching grounds, Stony Brook in Hyde Park, set aside as a reservation. ~~Only recently~~ Turtle Pond Parkway was renamed "Enneking Parkway."

#### Railroads Play Key Role

/ Earliest rail service for the Hyde Park area was provided in the 1850's by the Boston and Providence Railroad and the Midland Railroad. When the Midland went <sup>bankrupt</sup> ~~bankrupt~~, settlers in the Fairmount section purchased a donkey engine and two cars. The Fairmount Steam Car Co. offered two trains a day to Boston. A plague of court injunctions forced a quick termination to the enterprise.<sup>47</sup>

The first railroad station with the name Hyde Park was built in 1858 by the Rev. Henry Lyman. Financed by subscriptions, the two-story structure contained <sup>space also for religious</sup> ~~religious~~ meetings. The station served the Boston and Providence Railroad, which was succeeded by the Old Colony Railroad in 1888. By the late 1880's there were seven railroad stations and 45 trains traveled each day on week-days

on the two lines serving Hyde Park. The New York and New England Railroad (later the New Haven and now the Penn Central) extolled the virtues of Hyde Park as the "first town about Boston to be built up by cooperative effort, and it has been one of the most successful...." <sup>48</sup>

A.H. Davis, a station agent, wrote:

Business at the Hyde Park station of the New York and New England Railroad is steadily increasing, both in passenger and freight traffic, the receipts of the station being about four times as large at the present time [1888] as compared with the year 1883. Freight is being shipped to all parts of the country, South and West, and to South America. <sup>49</sup>

A spokesman for the Old Colony Railroad boasted that

*Town's*  
Hyde Park is now [1888] said to be one of the ~~best~~ <sup>3</sup> paying ~~business~~ on the Providence branch of the Old Colony Railroad. The railroad more than reciprocates for the business the town gives it. It is difficult to say which side the dependence is the greater, but without the railroad, Hyde Park would not be what it is at present, as the railroad outweighs all its natural advantages. <sup>50</sup>

A sharp contrast to most present day railroad practices was the announcement that the New York and New England Railroad had responded positively to a suggestion by the town's Park Committee and prepared to surround the Hyde Park Station with flowers and shrubs. "Everything will be done to make the first impression of newcomers as favorable as possible. The town will do well to do its park in this respect." Today the main Hyde Park station is boarded up and in shoddy condition.

#### Factories and Finance

For most of its 44 year history, Hyde Park took justifiable pride in both its cultural-literary progress and the growth, volume, and vitality of its industrial and commercial enterprises. A Boston Globe observer contended that "the history of our factories is the history of Hyde Park. The two are inseparable and the dependence

of the town upon the factories will increase with the coming factory or the enlargement of those already here." In 1893, Hyde Park had 28 factories, employing over 2,150 hands, paying out wages each year of about \$850,000, and having a yearly output of more than \$3,800,000. Capital invested exceeded \$2,000,000. These figures do not include blacksmith, and carpenter shops and laundries which employed many residents and paid out sizable annual wages. 51

The leading industry was the American Tool and Machine Co., which manufactured machinery for sugar refineries and employed as many as 350 workers. For many ~~years~~<sup>years</sup> the firm's general manager and president was Benjamin D. Radford, a pioneer resident and member of Hyde Park's first <sup>B</sup> Board of Selectmen. A 19th century "self-made" man, Mr. Radford was born in Portland, Maine, placed with a farmer at the age of 12 and trained as a machinist at the age of 15. He sharpened ~~his~~<sup>his</sup> skills in Manchester, N.H. and New Jersey mills and became a contractor and superintendent for the manufacture of cotton machinery. Returning to the Boston area, he entered the sewing machine business and later became chief executive of the <sup>American</sup> ~~American~~ Tool and Machine Co. 52

In 1865 Mr. Radford settled in the Fairmount section of what became the Town of Hyde Park three years later. A petitioner for the town's incorporation and <sup>a founder of</sup> ~~a founder of~~ the Hyde Park Savings Bank and the Hyde Park Water Co., Mr. Radford was president of the Waverly Club and vice president of the Hyde Park Historical Society. Father of 10 children and a Methodist, he was a Republican early in his life but later became an independent in politics.

Another major enterprise was the Brainard Milling Machine Co., which performed much work for arsenals in the U.S.A. and abroad. The

B.&F. Knight Cotton Mill, one of the oldest in Massachusetts, began operations in 1814 and by 1898 hired 350 employees. Still in business in 1970 is the Tileston & Hollingsworth Paper Mill, established in 1801. Other Hyde Park industrial enterprises in the late 19th century were the Robert Bleakie & Co. woolen mill; T.H. Gray's Shoddy Mills; the Boston Blower Co., manufacturers of blowers, air compressors and ice machines; Glover and Willcomb, producers of curled hair; The Scouring Mill for wool; and the Boston Rubber Gossamer Co., which employed 75 skilled Russians ~~Jews~~.<sup>53</sup>

One of the few successful business women in the Boston area, Miss A.M. Louge, owned and managed the Clifton Manufacturing Co. which produced rubber cloaks and coats. Hyde Park also patronized Dodge and Tyler's Grist Mill, which ground 1,500 bushels of meal annually. John Johnson manufactured 30 carriages and wagons per year, employing 15 hands who also did repairs. Other enterprises ~~were~~ <sup>were</sup> the Dye Factory, the Readville Color Works and the Sturtevant Mill Co., which moved to Hyde Park from Newcastle-on-the-Tyne in England.

The financial panic of 1873 which swept the nation played havoc with Hyde Park and almost menaced its future existence. Most of the real estate was heavily mortgaged, and much in amounts nearly up to the inflated valuation. Adding to the town's trouble was a fire on June 9, 1873 which destroyed the Bleakie woolen mill and cut-off jobs for 350 people. The depression, the mill fire and other <sup>problems</sup> ~~and other~~ ~~of the same kind~~ caused many workers and their families to leave Hyde Park. The "hard times" forced a drastic shrinkage in the assessed valuation. In 1873 real estate was valued at \$6,608,199, but in 1880 the figure shrank

to \$3,701,250. Careful management by the town's business and political leaders and a general improvement in the nation's financial condition resulted in better times, as one contemporary observer said:

The process of shaking things down to a substantial foundation was decidedly unpleasant, but the outcome has been beneficial. The estates lost by their unlucky former possessors have become the property of others better able to hold, improve and beautify them, and the town has thus gained in its outward appearance and the number of its well-to-do citizens. A greater conservatism is manifested in public and private enterprises, and the present status 1888 is one of healthy and well-based prosperity.<sup>54</sup>

#### Patriotism, People, and Occupations

Economic problems of the 1870's failed to dampen the townspeople's enthusiasm for the celebration of the nation's centennial on July 4, 1876. The day began with a procession, followed by a meeting of Hyde Park citizens in a grove at the corner of Austin and West streets. Highlights were a reading of the Declaration of Independence, prayers and the singing of "America" and "The Star Spangled Banner." In the afternoon, union religious services took place in the Congregational Church. That evening, residents gathered in Everett Square and witnessed the dedication of a new fire pumper, a gift to the town from the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Athletic events, including a regatta, and a grand display of fireworks concluded the gala celebration.<sup>55</sup>

The majority of the early inhabitants of Hyde Park were of English, Irish and Canadian origin. By the latter part of the 19th century, more residents derived their national origin from such lands as Germany, Italy, Sweden, Denmark and Austria, with a few coming from Russia.<sup>56</sup>

The changing composition of business and commercial interests and occupations shows by a comparison of town directories. An 1874

directory for Hyde Park, Dedham and Canton devoted 64 pages to Hyde Park, listing 1,600 residents and businesses and 90 names in its advertising section. The 1893 directory, entirely Hyde Park, contained 271 pages, 4,790 listings of individuals and businesses, and 31 pages with some 600 listings of businesses, factories and other commercial enterprises.<sup>57</sup>

~~The 1893~~ occupations in 1874 were dressmakers, blacksmiths, carpenters, bricklayers, shoemakers, teamsters, an author, farmers, laborers, organ builder, machinists, grain dealer, traveling agent, telegraph operator, stone cutter, saloon keeper, carriage manufacturer, hatter, wool sorter, banker and bread peddler. The 1890's brought such new listings as bicycle dealers, architects, book-sellers, an auctioneer and a taxidermist. The town supported 14 boarding houses and two hotels, the Willard House and the Everett House where transient charges were \$2 nightly. By 1903 the town contained an automobile repair and supply store, but still patronized five livery stables. Also in business were five veterinary surgeons, 10 milk dealers and an umbrella maker.

The first post office in the vicinity of Hyde Park opened in 1857 in a corner of a country store opposite the New York and New England Railroad depot, with one J. Russel as the first postmaster. By 1893 there were 11 postal employees and 31 letter boxes. First class mail cost two cents an ounce and post cards sold for one penny.<sup>58</sup>

As the 19th century drew to a close, new modes of transportation began to affect Hyde Park. A few automobiles were seen and the Norfolk Suburban Street Railway began street car service through Hyde Park and connecting with the Boston system.

Decline and Fall of the Town

Despite the optimistic outlook in the late 19th century, the advent of the 20th century brought an noticeable decline in the once vigorous social, cultural and industrial life of the town. For a number of reasons, some of which are described below, Hyde Park lost its momentum and finally its municipal identity. Opinions vary on why Hyde Park did not survive as a viable town. Perhaps the most reliable view comes from Miss Ellen Peterson, born in Hyde Park, librarian for many years of the Hyde Park branch of the Boston Public Library, and historian of the town:

- ....You ask me what I consider the reasons for annexation of Hyde Park to Boston. First of all, the period of Hyde Park history, which was rather remarkable, was contained within the latter half of the 19th century. Although a few people of importance to its growth lived a short period into the 20th century, they were no longer young enough to be active. The factors which drew these people to Hyde Park apparently no longer existed.
- ....These early settlers were people with a social conscience, as is evident in the fact that they so quickly erected schools, organized a library and organized churches, even going to the point where they contributed to the support of denominations to which they did not belong. Literary organizations abounded and the depth of some of their programs is breathtaking. Well known people from various walks of life were brought to the town to speak. Booker T. Washington, William Lloyd Garrison Jr., Hamlin Garland, and English literary lights are a few...
- .... In the 20th century we apparently attracted more people interested in personal aggrandizement. There were problems to be sure. Water supply was one. Apparently those responsible for governing the town were not as efficient and there were deficits. During 1911, newspaper articles warned against annexation, saying that the five cent fare was impossible, since two private firms owned the street railways and each must get its fare. The citizens were told to see what had happened to Charlestown, Roslindale and other groups which had been annexed. They were step-children of the city and none of the promises to them had been kept. In spite of all this, the vote was for annexation. 59

In 1910 Hyde Park's total assessed valuation was \$14,338,575. The town tax rate had risen from \$17 per \$1,000 in 1907 to \$19 per \$1,000 in 1910, while the 1910 Boston tax rate was \$16.40. This may have influenced many hard-pressed taxpayers, both individuals and

businesses, to press for annexation. Teachers, policemen and firemen stood to gain by annexation. For example, Hyde Park elementary teachers received a maximum yearly salary of \$600 and a minimum of \$420; in Boston the figures were \$1,022 and \$600. Hyde Park's eight permanent firemen received \$1,000 annually; in Boston they could earn \$1,400. Police lieutenants received \$1,200 annually; after annexation they earned \$1,600.<sup>60</sup>

At the time of annexation, Hyde Park's population was 15,507. Only 1,736 or 60 percent of the town's 2,866 eligible voters went to the polls. For annexation, 1,106; opposed, 630. Boston voters approved the annexation, although Mayor John F. Fitzgerald, grandfather of President John F. Kennedy, complained of the cost to Boston of taking over Hyde Park. The Massachusetts General Court approved annexation legislation. Quietly, without fanfare, at 12:01 a.m. on January 1, 1912, Hyde Park ceased to exist as a town. Its 15,507 inhabitants, homes, schools, library, churches, factories, businesses and other elements became incorporated into the City of Boston, which then increased to a population of 686,000.

So ended a rich era and an exciting and eventful history of an unusual Massachusetts town that survived only 44 years. In succeeding years some citizens regretted the action of the electorate in joining the City of Boston.<sup>61</sup>

The late State Senator and then Rep, Julius Ansel filed a bill in 1962 to allow Hyde Park to secede from Boston and become a separate town again. Nothing came of this move, although a spokesman for the "Stop the Southwest Expressway Committee" complained: "If Hyde Park were a separate town, then we'd have our own vote on this expressway cutting into our town. But now it's the Mayor who has the veto power."

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