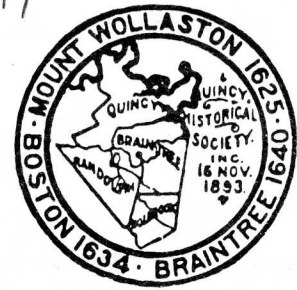


Quincy History



Quincy, Massachusetts

Quincy Historical Society

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Quincy's Two Great Railroad Disasters

by Ruth H. Wainwright

The railroads are an important part of Quincy's history. They helped make the city what it is today. Also, Quincy is famous for the Granite Railway, built in 1826, the first commercial railway in this country. On July 25, 1832, a man was killed in an accident on the Granite Railway incline. This might be considered to be the country's first railroad fatality. However, it was two later disastrous train wrecks that attracted wide attention.

The first of these took place on October 8, 1878 about one-quarter mile north of Wollaston Station. It is of special interest because of the events that preceded it. The second occurred on August 19, 1890 just north of the Dimmock Street crossing and directly behind our Adams Academy property.

October 8, 1878 - The Wollaston Train Wreck

The year 1878 was a period of intense interest in rowing as a spectator sport. Professional oarsmen competed for high stakes. An estimated 30,000 watched one competition on the Charles River. Great rivalries developed, none being more intense than that between Boston and Portland, Maine. In 1878 Boston had had the best of the competition. However, Michael J. Davis, a Portland druggist and his city's single scull champion, had never been defeated. Davis issued a challenge to meet a Boston representative in a four-mile race for \$1,000 a side.

Boston's natural choice to meet the challenger was its star oarsman, Patrick Francis Reagan. Patsy Reagan, who worked as a teamster for the Boston Can Company and had a wife and two children, did not have this kind of money to wager, so his friends and fans raised the \$1,000 and the challenge was accepted. Reagan would bet everything he had or could borrow. His friends and fans also bet heavily.

It was originally planned that the race would be on a weekend in the Charles River where a crowd of 50,000 spectators was anticipated. Representatives of the Old Colony Railroad persuaded those in charge that the tides would be wrong in the Charles River (this was before the Charles River Basin was constructed), and that the race should be held on a Tuesday at Silver Lake, a recreation

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Our Adams Academy Building A National Historic Landmark

The description of the architecture of the building is from the paper by Monique B. Lehner presented before the Quincy Historical Society on October 27, 1994 in connection with the dedication as a National Historic Landmark, and the nomination form of which Mrs. Lehner was a principal researcher and author.

The recognition of the Academy Building for its architectural significance is a great compliment to Quincy. The city has long been known for the historical importance of buildings and sites here. Now, with the Adams Academy Building joining the Thomas Crane Public Library and the United First Parish Church as National Historic Landmarks, the importance of Quincy's architectural features is given national recognition. With three buildings now recognized, Quincy has a special offering for students and others interested in architecture. Also it should give to

local people, including our members, a greater appreciation of a part of their cultural heritage with which they have lived but largely taken for granted.

In his deed establishing the Adams Temple and School Fund, John Adams wrote the basic specifications for the building. It was to be a stone schoolhouse, he selected the location, it was to be of Quincy granite, and it was to be built when sufficient money had accrued in the Fund. Further, the Supervisors of the Adams Temple and School Fund accepted the responsibility of seeing that the school that the building would house fully carried out John Adams' wishes. In the years that followed, the supervisors considered building three times but each time found the available funds inadequate.

In 1868 a fourth attempt was made to build the schoolhouse. This time it succeeded although changes in:

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