



Kathryn A. Toomey  
Register of Deeds

In October 2024, Stephanie Fattman (Register of Probate) and I visited the Lancaster Senior Center, as a result of our visit to the center of town, I was inspired to read and write about this lovely rural town.

**Lancaster** is a town in Worcester County, Massachusetts, United States. Incorporated in 1653, Lancaster is the oldest town in Worcester County.

Lancaster boasts being the official "mothertown" to all of Eastern central Massachusetts. Towns such as Harvard, Bolton, Leominster, Clinton, Berlin, Sterling, and part of West Boylston were all formed from territory of the original boundaries of Lancaster.

Here are two (2) out of many notable people with ties to Lancaster, Massachusetts:

**John Eliot Thayer**  
(April 3, 1862 – July 29, 1933) Excerpts taken from author John C. Phillips

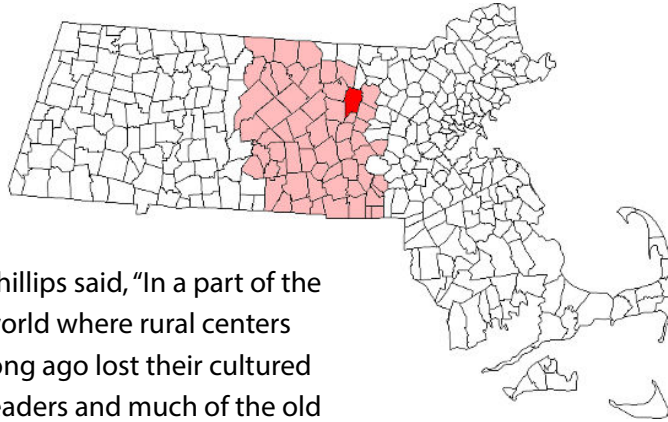
# Worcester Registry of Deeds

## Newsletter

November 2024 ~ Issue #37 ~ Town of Lancaster

### What's Inside?

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Phillips said, "In a part of the world where rural centers long ago lost their cultured leaders and much of the old social tradition, John Thayer stands out as the finest example of what a New England country gentleman ought to be." John Eliot Thayer was born in Boston and moved to Lancaster shortly after graduating from Harvard in 1885. He married Evelyn Duncan Forbes in 1886 and moved to a large house on George Hill Road in Lancaster. There are several parcels of land purchased by Thayer on George Hill Road recorded in the Worcester District Registry of Deeds Book

1132, Page 217, (11 acres); Book 1209, Page 215, (9 acres 117 rods); Book 1236, Page 115, (18.1 acres). He also purchased land on Bull Hill and woodlots adjacent to other lots he owned. Thayer and his brother Bayard had a large kennel and first started breeding fox terriers, deer hound and old-fashion English bull dogs. Thayer then became interested in breeding and raising horse. In the late nineteen nineties he turned from horses to

### Community Statistics

Worcester South District

147

Number of Recordings in October 2024

\$398K

Median Home Value

82%

Homes Owned vs. Rented

3,053

Total Housing Units

305

Density (Houses per Square Mile)

his permanent interest in birds.

His first interest in ornithology was local birds in which he paid close attention to nests and eggs. His interest then expanded to the birds of North America. His collections were first housed in several wooden buildings close to his home, but when these became unsafe and crowded he built a beautiful brick building in the town of South Lancaster and opened it to the public as a museum in 1904. Many of the leading ornithologists of the time visited the Thayer Museum and it was estimated that more than ten thousand visitors came to the museum in the first six years.



Spoon-billed Sandpiper

Thayer strove to make his collection as complete as possible and obtained large series of beautifully prepared specimens. Thayer loved his country life style and almost never traveled. He never went on an ornithological collecting trip. He would send out collectors to Alaska, Siberia and Mexico and other "far-away" places to obtain rarities of eggs, nests and bird specimens for his collection.

Thayer held many positions of trust within the Town of Lancaster and Massachusetts. Among a few were the Massachusetts Forest and Park Association for Worcester County, Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture, Massachusetts Fish and Game Association, the local tree warden and Trustee of the Lancaster Library.

John Eliot Thayer was a man ahead of his time when you consider the work he did in the fields of agriculture, horticulture, conservation and the study of birds.

**Charles Bulfinch** (August 8, 1763 – April 15, 1844) was an early American architect, and has been regarded by many as the first American-born professional architect to practice.

Bulfinch split his career between his native Boston, Massachusetts, and Washington, D.C., where he served as Commissioner of Public Building and built the intermediate United States Capitol rotunda and dome. His works are notable for their simplicity, balance, and good taste, and as the origin of a distinctive Federal style of classical domes, columns, and ornament that dominated early 19th-century American architecture.

Bulfinch was responsible for the design of the Boston Common, the remodeling and enlargement of Faneuil Hall (1805), and the construction of India Wharf. In these Boston years, he also designed the Massachusetts State Prison (1803); Boylston Market (1810); University Hall for



First Church of Christ Unitarian in Lancaster, MA

Harvard University (1813–1814); **First Church of Christ, Unitarian in Lancaster, Massachusetts** (1815–1817); and the Bulfinch Building, home of the Ether Dome at Massachusetts General Hospital (1818), its completion overseen by Alexander Parris, who was working in Bulfinch's office at the time the architect was summoned to Washington.

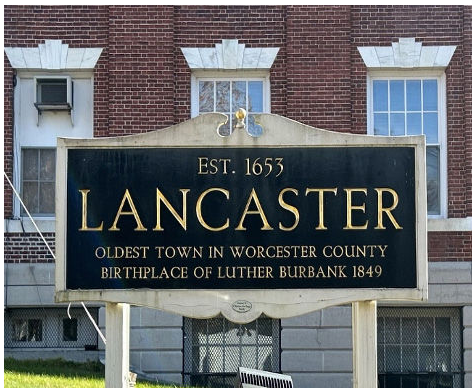


Worcester County Courthouse in Worcester, MA

Also of note: he was the architect of one of my favorite buildings in the region, the Worcester County Courthouse (1801-1803) 2 Main Street, Worcester, Massachusetts.

## History of the Worcester District South Registry of Deeds

In 1728, Lancaster attempted to pressure the General Court (commonly called the State Legislature) into an enactment of legislation which would create a new county in the central part of the state. Lancaster's substantial influence and superior longevity supported this leading venture. The movement failed initially, but a successful one and several others would follow with proposals to subdivide Worcester County. Lancaster's prestigious role in local affairs allowed the town to generate momentum and support in the Legislature. Lancaster did not promote itself for the county seat at this time. Although Worcester would be awarded this honor in the future, at the time



Worcester existed as a relatively young town with population of only a few hundred and therefore, did not attempt to promote itself for the county seat. As author John Nelson's writes in his history of Worcester County, "It is not unlikely that Worcester citizens recognized their humble place in the scheme of political influence."

Moreover, while Worcester residents accepted their humble position in political matters, the General Court recognized the importance of

Worcester's centrally geographic location. Additionally, the post road converged in Worcester. Both the town's coveted setting and Judge Joseph Wilder, Lancaster's most persuasive orator, contributed to Worcester's obtainment of the county seat. Judge Joseph Wilder convinced the citizens of his town that if Lancaster was to be names shire town, then it could become a haven for undesirable elements. Criminals brought to trial would "naturally" bring with them such vices as gambling, drinking, fighting and racing horses in the village streets. Thus, even though Worcester would later prosper as the county seat, no indication that the people of Lancaster regretted their earlier decision exists, possibly due to the Judge's powerful statement. On April 2, 1731, the General Court of the Commonwealth enacted legislation which provided

the incorporation of Worcester County. The text of the act was published three days later and declared: "... Worcester, Lancaster, Westborough, Shrewsbury, Southborough, Leicester, Rutland, and Lunenburg (all from Middlesex County), Mendon, Woodstock (later to be released to the State of Connecticut), Oxford, Sutton, Uxbridge, and land granted to several petitioners of Medfield (all in Suffolk County), Brookfield (from the County of Hampshire), and the South town laid out to the Narragansett soldiers... and all lands lying within said townships with the inhabitants thereon, shall from and after the 10th day of July 1731, be and remain one entire and distinct County be the name of Worcester, of which Worcester is to be the County or Shire Town." Currently, 13 of the towns mentioned above still remain as part of Worcester County.

## Homemade Cranberry Sauce

### Ingredients

- 12 oz. of fresh cranberries
- 1 cup freshly squeezed orange juice
- Peel of 1 orange
- 1 cup of sugar (preferably raw/demerara sugar but regular is fine, or stevia for a sugar substitute)
- 2 small/medium size cinnamon sticks
- ¼ teaspoon of nutmeg

### Directions

1. Rinse cranberries under cold water and pick through for any berries that may have gone bad
2. Place the cranberries, orange juice, orange peel, sugar, cinnamon sticks and nutmeg into a medium saucepan
3. Bring the mixture to a boil, stirring occasionally (make sure to keep a close watch of the saucepan as the mixture can boil over quickly)
4. Once the mixture boils, turn the heat to low and cover for 15 - 20 minutes, or until the cranberries begin to burst, stirring occasionally (still keeping a close watch of the saucepan, lift the lid every now and then to allow steam to escape)
5. Remove from the heat and remove the orange peel and cinnamon sticks, allow to cool and transfer to a container or keep it in the sauce pan and place it in the fridge overnight to thicken
6. \*Optional - For a smoother sauce use a stick blender to break-up berries
7. Now serve and enjoy!!





