



DRABBINGTON LODGE AWAITES NEXT CHAPTER

For more than a century, the picturesque Shingle-style building at 135 North Avenue has hosted summer guests, senior citizens, and for a five-year period, young women studying to be physical education teachers. The story begins in 1897, when George and Sarah Thurston purchased an existing property on North Avenue and opened a boarding house for about a dozen guests. After two seasons, they made plans to enlarge and remodel it to accommodate 40; but before work began, a major fire destroyed both the house and adjacent large barn.

The Thurstons quickly rebuilt. Their new hostelry was christened Drabbington Lodge after Sarah's birthplace in England. The fashionable new building was the work of Boston architect Frank Weston. A newspaper article at the time of the opening in 1899 called it "one of the best of suburban hotels." For city dwellers who could not afford their own place, the lodge offered the perfect summer escape. Guests could lounge in the large reception hall, parlor, billiard room, or smoking room. The dining room seated 60. The 32 sleeping rooms on the second and third floors were "beautifully furnished," and guests enjoyed the luxury of two bathrooms per floor. Thanks to the recent availability of electrical service, there was even "artificial light at night." On the 27-acre grounds, there was a tennis court, seven-hole golf course, Mrs. Thurston's much-lauded garden, and a landscaped footpath to a nearby rocky knoll, where "The Cottage," now 153 North Avenue was built in 1901. In 1904, a log "bungalow," now 147 North Avenue, was built behind the Cottage. At the height of the season, all three buildings were "constantly filled to overflowing."

Newspaper clippings from the turn of the century give the names of families arriving each week from as far away as Indiana, Ohio, Kansas, and Minnesota with children, governesses, nurses, and chauffeurs, for indefinite stays. Many guests returned season after season. Some years the lodge was open in the winter, with sledding, snowshoeing, and sleigh rides as popular activities.

Sarah Thurston died in 1910. George and his second wife, Lenore, operated the lodge until 1920, when it was leased to a "well known hotel man." Lenore was still involved after her husband's death in 1923, and for a time the name was changed to Drabbington Inn. In 1935, the property was leased to the Posse-Nissen School, also called the Posse Institute. This women's college of physical education added a portable wooden gymnasium. About 75 students lived here until 1940. Some years later it was leased to the Sargent College of Physical Education at Boston University for use as a dormitory; and in the mid-1950s, it operated as the Weston Inn. The building was readapted as the Westonian retirement home in 1996 and later as Sunrise Senior Living, which closed in mid-November, 2020.



(Clockwise, from upper left): Drabbington Lodge postcard 1913; Sarah and George Thurston; "The Cottage" at 153 North Ave; Thurston Bungalow postcard c. 1912; Drabbington Inn direction sign; and photo of young women at Posse-Nissen School, from the 1936 yearbook. All items are in the collection of the Weston Historical Society.

