

Figure 10-46. The Gowing farmhouse on North Avenue was purchased in 1897 by George and Sarah Thurston, who opened the Drabbington Lodge. This photograph was taken in 1898, the year the house and barn burned to the ground.



Figure 10-47. After the fire, the Thurstons built this Shingle-style hotel, which was painted a wood-brown color with white trim and a green roof. Three years after it opened, the press reported, "Drabbington Lodge is more popular than ever this season. There is a constant stream of arrivals and departures, and the guests are among the best society." The building is now a retirement home at 135 North Avenue.



fields where the family could take guests on carriage rides without being inconvenienced by traffic.⁹³ Although the Browns returned to Cambridge each winter, local residents used "Brown's Pond" for skating and cutting ice.

Henry A. Gowing (1834–1894) was a prosperous Boston shirt manufacturer who used his family homestead on North Avenue as a summer residence.⁹⁴ In the late 1880s, he held a family reunion attended by 200 Gowing descendants, who wandered the extensive grounds with its "attractive walks, nooks, arbors [and] beds of flowers" and enjoyed an extended view of the countryside from an observatory on a nearby hill. After a dinner catered by Dill of Waltham, guests gathered in the "tastefully decorated" barn, amid flags and

pine boughs, where Gowing gave a sketch of the family genealogy and one of the young girls read an original poem, "Ye olden time."⁹⁵

Drabbington Lodge

In the spring of 1897, George and Sarah Thurston purchased the Gowing property and opened a boardinghouse for about a dozen guests. After two summers they made plans to enlarge and remodel the farmhouse for 40 guests, but a major fire destroyed both house and barn in November 1898.⁹⁶

The Thurstons quickly rebuilt. Their hostelry, the Drabbington Lodge, was named after Sarah's birthplace in England.⁹⁷ The Shingle-style design was the work of Boston architect Frank Weston.⁹⁸ A newspaper article at the time of the opening in 1899 called it "one of the best of suburban hotels."⁹⁹ For city dwellers who could not afford their own country place, the lodge offered the perfect summer escape. The reception hall was "large and inviting," with fireplace and cushioned window seats. At one end was a writing room and a large parlor with mahogany and wicker furniture, a Hallet and Davis grand piano, and Japanese and Dresden urns. There was "artificial light at night," thanks to the recent availability of electrical service.

The dining room seated 60. Next to the billiard room was a smoking room furnished in green and red with mahogany furniture and "hair-seated chairs." The 32 sleeping rooms on the second and third floors were "beautifully furnished, according to the price paid for their occupancy. Iron and brass bedsteads are numerous . . . every sleeping-room has



Figure 10-48. The Drabbington Lodge was probably the first major building in Weston to be wired for electricity, which was introduced into Weston about 1897.

a mantel and at least one closet. The floors are all of hardwood, and three or more rugs adorn the floor of every room.”¹⁰⁰ New hair mattresses and feather pillows ensured sleeping comfort, and guests enjoyed the luxury of two bathrooms per floor. Servants’ rooms were in the basement, along with the kitchen, vegetable cellar, and laundry.

Behind the lodge was a tennis court and a seven-hole golf course. A landscaped footpath originally led west to the summit of a rocky knoll, where an observatory offered views of the countryside. In 1900 the Thurstons built a stable across the street with a 50-foot-long carriage room and space for 18 horses.¹⁰¹ In 1901–02, they built a “cottage” on the knoll, designed by architect George Strout.¹⁰² Newspaper articles said that Mrs. Thurston was “strongly attached to this estate, and is building this house for her home”; but it was rented when completed and for many summers thereafter. To provide more space and further enhance the resort atmosphere, Strout designed a log “bungalow” behind the cottage in 1904, labeled on postcards as the Drabbington Annex.¹⁰³ At the height of the season, all three buildings were “constantly filled to overflowing.”

The location of the Drabbington Lodge combined all the advantages of the country within easy commuting distance of the city. The lodge was “delightfully located on high land, where cool breezes blow in the summer and a charming view may be had all the year around.” There was “every opportunity . . . for golf, tennis, croquet and other amusements.” One advertisement describes it as “a 7-Gabled English Inn on estate of 27 acres, largely devoted to Golf, Home Cuisine, open wood fires, hot-water heat, garage, George A. Thurston Estate.”¹⁰⁴

The much lauded garden just west of the bungalow added to the picturesque quality of the resort, as indicated in this 1908 account:



Mrs. Thurston has probably the most beautiful flower garden in Weston. . . . The grounds are radiant with the blooms of hundreds upon hundreds of flowers among which are phloxes in greatest variety of coloring, hydrangeas, gladioli, dahlias, golden glow and hollyhocks. It is a delightful sight and adds much to the attractiveness of grounds already charming.¹⁰⁵

Figure 10-49. The Cottage at 153 North Avenue was built in 1902 by the Thurstons, who often rented it to one family for the summer. (2001 photo)

A 1913 newspaper columnist wrote that “next to his wife and baby Landlord Thurston’s affections are centered on his beautiful garden. . . . Roses, roses and more roses in almost endless profusion.”¹⁰⁶

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, nurses, chauffeurs, and governesses, for indefinite stays. Many “permanent guests” returned season after season and regarded the lodge as a second home.¹⁰⁷

In *Once Upon a Pung*, B.H. Dickson III describes “well-to-do people [who] would spend several weeks there rocking on the porch, playing golf, or walking



VIEW BUNGALOW FROM DRIVEWAY

Figure 10-50. The Thurston Bungalow at 147 North Avenue was built in 1904 as an annex to Drabington Lodge. Early-20th-century bungalows came in all sizes, with details inspired by exotic architecture from the Japanese teahouse to the Swiss chalet. The Thurstons used the word bungalow to suggest a retreat or summer house in the Adirondack rustic tradition. It was built of round logs that were probably early telephone poles, notched at the corners.

along the shaded lanes in the neighborhood.¹⁰⁸ The Kendal Green column of the *Waltham Free Press* in 1898 tells how Mrs. Thurston's boarders and three dogs set out on a coon hunt and returned for a midnight supper.¹⁰⁹ Other articles describe a "hurdy-gurdy" party, Halloween festivities, book contests, and whist and progressive euchre card games. The ladies of the lodge had dancing parties on the spacious piazzas and formed a Thursday-morning circle that sponsored lectures and literary reviews by guests, followed by sewing of sheets and diapers for the Waltham Baby Hospital. Some years, Drabington Lodge was open during the winter, with coasting, snowshoeing, and sledding as favorite activities. On winter evenings, guests gathered in front of the fire for games and storytelling.

The Thurstons celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary at the bungalow in 1906, attended by many of Weston's best-known residents. The rest of the town was provided with a complete list of "beau-

tiful and valuable gifts" and who gave them, printed in the newspaper for all to evaluate.¹¹⁰ When she died in 1910, Sarah Thurston was described as "a woman not only of rare executive ability but of a most kindly and sympathetic nature. Under exceedingly efficient management, the Lodge has become one of the most favorably known of suburban family hotels."¹¹¹

A year later George, who was then 58, married Lenore Allen, a 30-year-old nurse originally from Nova Scotia. The couple had one child. The lodge was leased in 1920 to a "well-known hotel man" who kept it open in winter. Lenore Thurston remained involved in the management of the Drabington Inn from the time of her husband's death in 1923 until about 1935, when it was leased to the Posse-Nissen School, also referred to as the Posse Institute. This girls college of physical education added a 45-foot by 100-foot portable wooden gymnasium to the existing recreational facilities.¹¹² About 75 students lived in the former lodge at least until 1940.¹¹³ Some years later it was leased to the Sargent College of Physical Education at Boston University for use as a dormitory. In the mid-1950s, the facility operated as the Weston Inn. It was subsequently readapted as a retirement home.

Brodrick's Store

The post office and general store that General Marshall helped to establish in 1886 soon became an integral part of the Kendal Green neighborhood. Alfred Leslie Cutting, son of George Warren Cutting Jr., was running the store in 1888 and was appointed postmaster at Kendal Green in 1889, when he was just 21.¹¹⁴ The *Waltham Daily Free Press* occasionally noted the bargains available at A.L. Cutting's in short promotions inserted between local



Figure 10-51. Drabington Lodge closed during the Depression and the building was leased to the Posse-Nissen School, where girls were trained in physical education. This photograph of a May Day celebration was probably taken in the late 1930s.