

# Boylston Veteran becomes Postmaster

*Excerpt of the life of John Tucker who ran the Center Store and became one of Boylston's Postmasters, as published in the "Boylston Veterans of the American Civil War" by Leah Withers, Patricia Kelleher Bartram, Nancy O'Loughlin Filgate, Elise Poretzky, Victoria Triolo, Julian Baldwin, Paige Money, Jordan Money, Isabella Uva*

**John Tucker**, the youngest of nine children of Benjamin Baker Tucker and Eliza Mixter Smith, was born on 9 June 1841 in Shrewsbury, Worcester County, Massachusetts.<sup>1</sup> John's father, Benjamin, was also born in Shrewsbury, on 18 July 1797, the son of Jedediah Tucker and Sarah/Sally Baker.<sup>2</sup> Eliza, his mother, was the daughter of Daniel Smith and Alice Mixter, born about 1800 in Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts.<sup>3</sup> His parents married in Worcester on 22 November 1820.<sup>4</sup>

## Siblings and Early Years

The family began their expansion in 1821 with the birth in Worcester on the 15<sup>th</sup> May of Benjamin and Eliza's first child, Eliza Ann.<sup>5</sup> The next four children, all sons, were also born in Worcester: Charles Baker arrived 12 December 1823, followed by Alfred on 29 May 1825; Smith on 8 March 1828; Martin Saxter on 15 April 1830. These births were all recorded in Shrewsbury Vital Records noting these the five eldest were born elsewhere. The three oldest were found on an online database including Worcester birth records, although Smith and Martin Saxter were not. However, given that census records show that the family lived in Worcester until at least 1830, it is probable that they, like their elder siblings, were born in Worcester.<sup>6</sup> The remaining four children were all born in Shrewsbury: Laura on 6 February 1835; Joseph on 8 March 1837; Jane in 23 November 1839; and finally, John in 1841.<sup>7</sup> With children born over a 20-year time period, there was a large gap between the older and younger siblings, so much so that many of the older ones were reaching adulthood and moving out of the house by the time the younger children were born. By way of illustration, Eliza Ann, the oldest, had already wed William Styles and moved out three years before John was born.<sup>8</sup> Despite this, John certainly had plenty of loving siblings around him as he grew up and entered the family business.

John spent his early years attending school with his sister, Laura, and brother, Joseph. By the time he was 14 years old, however, he began work as a shoemaker just like all his older brothers were doing at the time.<sup>9</sup> Eventually, his sister, Laura, married Jonathan Morey and this new brother-in-law joined the household, along with the couple's newborn daughter, Mary.<sup>10</sup> Going forward, his siblings began to move out of the house, including Alfred, Martin Saxter and Jane, and it would soon be time for John to head out on his own as well.

## Move to Boylston and Enlistment

John moved to Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, and continued his work as a shoemaker until his enlistment at the age of 21 years, as a private in Company C, 34<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Infantry Regiment.<sup>11</sup> The regiment was mustered 31 July 1862, and John was shortly promoted to the rank of corporal on 8 August 1862. John was 5' 9" tall with blue eyes and dark hair. John was on the casualty sheet and discharged on 5 January 1863 from Fort Lyon, Virginia for disability and did not see any of the major battles that his regiment went on to fight. However, he was not officially mustered out until 16 June 1865.<sup>12</sup>



**CORPORAL JOHN TUCKER**  
1841-1898  
BHSM Photograph Collection



**ANNIE TUCKER**  
wife of John Tucker  
BHSM Photograph Collection

<sup>1</sup> Birth Records, Shrewsbury, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1841, digital image, ancestry.com

<sup>2</sup> Birth Records, Shrewsbury, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1797, online database, ancestry.com

<sup>3</sup> Gravestone, Eliza M. Tucker, Mountain View Cemetery, Shrewsbury, Worcester County, Massachusetts, findagrave.com

<sup>4</sup> United States, Massachusetts, Compiled Marriages, 1633-1850, Worcester, Worcester County, 1820, online database, ancestry.com

<sup>5</sup> United States, Massachusetts, Town Birth Records, 1620-1850, Worcester, Worcester County, 1821, online database, ancestry.com

<sup>6</sup> United States, Massachusetts, Town Birth Records, 1620-1850, Worcester, Worcester County, 1823 and 1825, online database, ancestry.com

<sup>7</sup> United States, Massachusetts, Town Birth Records, 1620-1850, Shrewsbury, Worcester County, 1828, 1830, 1835, 1837, and 1839, online database, ancestry.com

<sup>8</sup> Marriage Records, Shrewsbury, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1838, digital image, ancestry.com

<sup>9</sup> United States Federal Census, Shrewsbury, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1860, digital image, ancestry.com

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Boylston Records of Soldiers and Officers

<sup>12</sup> John Tucker, Civil War Muster Roll Military Records, digital images, fold3.com





**TUCKER HOME**

*Digital Commonwealth Photograph Collection*

### **Home, Marriage and Children**

Upon his return home, John met Anna McRell, an Irish immigrant from Carlingford, County Louth, Ireland, the daughter of James McRell and Anna Connell. John and Anna were married on 21 May 1863 in Boylston by Reverend William W. Colburn, pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Cherry Valley, Leicester, Worcester County, Massachusetts. Anna was age 19 years; John was age 21 years and it was the first marriage for both bride and groom.<sup>13</sup>

Their first child, Eliza Burnette, was born 11 August 1864 in Cumberland, Providence County, Rhode Island.<sup>14</sup> Their other two children were both born in Boylston, where the family lived in the Sawyers Mills part of the town: Lillian Frances was born 12 August 1866 and then their last child, Charles Raymond, was born 27 August 1872.<sup>15,16</sup>

### **General Store Established; Appointment as Postmaster for Boylston**

John continued to work as shoemaker for a few more years until 21 September 1886 when he established a general store in Boylston. Tucker's General Store, located near the Town Hall on Central Street in Boylston Center, sold the staples of everyday living including things such as wheat, yeast, oil, and cotton. The store also served as the U.S. Post Office, with John serving as Postmaster.<sup>17</sup> In this era, the postmaster was a political appointment by the First Assistant Postmaster General in Washington, D. C., or if the annual salary exceeded a specific sum of money the appointment came by nomination of the President of the United States with confirmation by the United States Senate.<sup>18</sup>



**TUCKER STORE & BOYLSTON POST OFFICE**

*BHSM Photograph Collection*

For more information on the U.S. Appointments of Boylston Post Offices and Its Postmasters see: [https://www.boylstonhistory.org/category/Post Offices and Its Postmasters Boylston/c137](https://www.boylstonhistory.org/category/Post%20Offices%20and%20Its%20Postmasters%20Boylston/c137)

On 20 May 1890, John and Anna's daughter Lillian Frances married George Albert Hastings in Berlin, Worcester County, Massachusetts. They were married by Reverend W. A. Houghton of Berlin. George was age 25 years and a farmer; Lillian was age 23 years. It was the first marriage for both bride and groom.<sup>19</sup> George was born 8 April 1865 in Boylston, the son of George Reed Hastings and Eda Sofia Fletcher.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Marriage Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1863

<sup>14</sup> Birth Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1864 (recorded in Boylston, but born in Cumberland, RI)

<sup>15</sup> United States, Massachusetts, State Census, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1865, digital image, ancestry.com

<sup>16</sup> Birth Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1866 and 1872

<sup>17</sup> Appointments of U.S. Postmaster, Vol 47, Worcester County, Massachusetts, digital image, ancestry.com

<sup>18</sup> The Nineteenth Century Postmaster and his duties, Claire Prechtel-Kluskens, National Archives, 2007

<sup>19</sup> Marriage Records, Berlin, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1890, digital image, ancestry.com

<sup>20</sup> Birth Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1865



### J. Tucker Store Sold in 1896

John owned and operated the J. Tucker Store until 1896 when he sold it to George Reed Hastings, the father-in-law of his daughter Lillian, who ran the store until his death in 1912. At that juncture, his son George A. Hastings and Lillian took it over, operating it until 1915.<sup>21</sup>

### Death and Interment

John was, sadly, not to have a long retirement. Just two years after selling his store, he died from lung disease on 23 October 1898 at age 57 years, 5 months, 14 days in Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts. He was buried in the Pine Grove Cemetery in Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts.<sup>22,23</sup>



**JOHN TUCKER GRAVESTONE**  
*Pine Grove Cemetery*  
*Photograph by Bruce D. Filgate*

### Property Taken for Wachusett Reservoir; Move to Worcester

After her husband's death, Anna's property was taken by eminent domain by the Massachusetts Metropolitan Water Works for the construction of the Wachusett Reservoir for the residents of Boston, Suffolk County, Massachusetts.<sup>24</sup> Subsequently, Anna relocated to Worcester where she rented a property at 19 Washington Avenue (adjacent to today's Polar Park) and lived there with two of her children, Charles and Eliza. At this time Charles worked as a clerk and Eliza was teaching school.<sup>25</sup>

At age 32, son Charles Raymond, a clerk, married 25-year-old milliner Minnie Mae Smith on 11 October 1904 in Worcester, Worcester, Massachusetts. Minnie Mae was born 26 September 1878 in Worcester, the daughter of Samuel Childs Smith and Pluma Fluella Dillingham.<sup>26,27</sup>

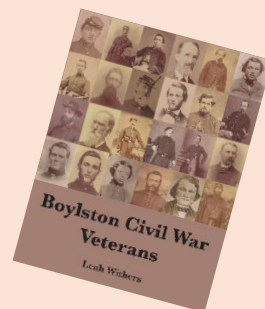
### Children's Deaths

John and Anna's daughter, Eliza moved to Northampton, Hampshire County, Massachusetts where she died at age 41 years, 1 month and 13 days on 24 September 1909. She had been suffering from tuberculosis for several years and her death was hastened by pneumonia.<sup>28</sup> John and Anna's son Charles Raymond died only seven years after his marriage, from pneumonia, at Hahnemann Hospital, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts early in the morning of 14 February 1911. At the time of his death, he was age 38 years, 5 months, and 18 days and had been working as a clerk in a grocery store and meat market.<sup>29</sup> Both Eliza and Charles were interred in the Tucker lot in section 3 of Pine Grove Cemetery in Boylston.<sup>30</sup> Following the deaths of her son and daughter, Anna moved back to Boylston and resided with her daughter Lillian Hastings and her family.<sup>31</sup>

### Wife's Passing and Interment

Anna McReel Tucker, the widow of John Tucker, died of arteriosclerosis at the age of 84 years, 9 months and 13 days on 17 November 1928 in Boylston. She was laid to rest next to her husband in Pine Grove Cemetery, Boylston.<sup>32,33</sup>

*For an historical perspective about the lives of the men of Boylston who served in the Civil War, stop by the Boylston Historical Society to view the Boylston Civil War Veterans publication any Tuesday or Saturday from 9am-12pm.*



<sup>21</sup> Boylston Historical Series, Bruce D. Filgate, 2012

<sup>22</sup> Death Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1898

<sup>23</sup> Gravestone, Cpl John Tucker, Pine Grove Cemetery, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts

<sup>24</sup> Public Documents of Massachusetts being the Annual Reports of Various Public Officers and Institutions for the 1896, Secretary of the Commonwealth, Vol. 1, 1897

<sup>25</sup> United States Federal Census, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1900, digital image, ancestry.com

<sup>26</sup> Marriage Records, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1904, digital image, ancestry.com

<sup>27</sup> Birth Records, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1878, digital image, ancestry.com

<sup>28</sup> Death Records, Northampton, Hampshire County, Massachusetts, 1909, digital image, ancestry.com

<sup>29</sup> Death Records, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1911, digital image, ancestry.com

<sup>30</sup> Gravestones, Eliza Burnette Tucker and Charles Raymond Tucker, Pine Gove Cemetery, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts

<sup>31</sup> United States Federal Census, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts 1920, digital image, ancestry.com

<sup>32</sup> Death Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1828

<sup>33</sup> Gravestone, Anna Tucker, Pine Grove Cemetery, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts