

Dr. Walter Hunnewell 1769 – 1855

Dr. Walter Hunnewell was a well-respected and skilled Watertown physician who spent his entire professional life there. He was born in Cambridge on August 4, 1769. He was six years old when the Revolutionary War broke out and graduated from Harvard College in 1787 in the same class with John Quincy Adams, William Cranch, Thaddeus Mason Harris, James Lloyd and Samuel Putnam. He studied medicine in Waltham with Dr. Marshall Spring and afterwards settled in Watertown.

He married Susannah Cooke on May 12, 1800. She was the daughter of Captain Phineas and Abigail Durant Cooke. He and Susannah lived on Main Street. He was for many years the only physician in Watertown and his practice extended to Newton and West Cambridge. He did not involve himself in town politics, but remained devoted to his patients until he was nearly 80 years old. He and his wife had two children: Jane Hunnewell born June 23, 1801 and Horatio Hollis Hunnewell born July 27, 1810. Hollis Hunnewell, as he was called, succeeded in banking. He became a member of the firm of Samuel Welles and married Isabella Pratt Welles. He purchased an estate in West Needham that he named "Wellesley" in honor of his wife's family and for whom the new town of Wellesley was named in 1881.

He gave a library and town hall to Wellesley. We remember him as one of the founders of the Watertown Free Public Library because he gave half the amount needed for the building and his son became one of the two architects chosen to design this Shaw and Hunnewell building.

In 1898 he gave a wing of the Watertown Free Public Library to honor the memory of his father. Dr. Walter Hunnewell was laid to rest on October 19, 1855.