

## WINCHESTER, HOME OF GOVERNORS

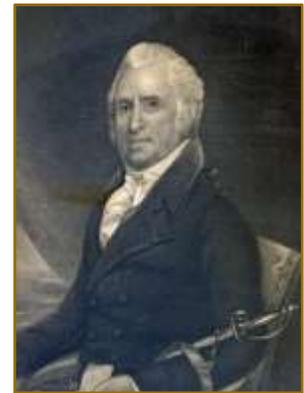
By Ellen Knight<sup>1</sup>

Winchester may lay claim to having included the homes of four Massachusetts governors – John Brooks, Edward Everett, Samuel W. McCall, and John Volpe. Brooks was not technically a resident of Winchester, since the town was not incorporated during his lifetime, but his family home was built in and continued to stand for several decades in what is now Winchester territory.

### JOHN BROOKS

John Brooks (1715-1825) was born at Symmes Corner when it was still part of Medford. He trained to be a physician, but when the Revolution began he joined the Continental Army, rising to the rank of colonel and becoming associated with General George Washington.

Though he returned to Medford to resume his medical career after the war, President Washington appointed him U.S. Marshal of Massachusetts. Other appointments followed, and he was sent to the Legislature several times.



Brooks was elected governor seven successive years, serving from 1816 to 1823. Like the next Winchester governor, Edward Everett, he was a Whig (and thus, like the Republicans who followed, opposed to the Democrats).



The Brooks' family home stood at what is now the intersection of Main Street and Everell Road. It was demolished in 1881 during the widening of Main Street.

## EDWARD EVERETT

Edward Everett (1794-1865) was one of the most distinguished statesmen of his day. He did so many things—president of Harvard University, Governor of Massachusetts, U.S. Senator, Secretary of State, minister to Great Britain, candidate for vice-president, editor, trustee of the Boston Public Library, and (perhaps the most famous thing he did while a resident of Winchester) orator at Gettysburg along with President Lincoln—that he was called “Edward Ever-at-it.”



A native of Dorchester, Everett came to Winchester late in life, well after his years as governor (1836-1840). He purchased a considerable area of the original Squaw Sachem farm on what would be later called Myopia Hill plus land at the foot of the hill abutting the Mystic Lake, known as the Pond Plain, from the Wyman and Gardner families in 1858. For a short time, prior to the coming of the Myopia Club, the hill was called Everett Heights. He built a house in 1859 on what is now the Robinson Circle peninsula, situated across the lake from his brother-in-law Peter Chardon in Medford.



The Winchester house was intended for his son Edward who died in 1864 and was probably used as a secondary residence by Everett. And it was ruined, he complained in a lawsuit he instituted against Charlestown. When a dam was constructed at the Mystic Lakes to form a reservoir for the Charlestown Water Works, part of his land was flooded and a grove of trees (a windbreak) was cut down. “Whereas it was formerly a healthful and habitable situation for a residence,” he contended, “it had not been since, and would not be again such.” Although he sued for the full value of his estate, \$30,000, the referees awarded him nearly \$20,000. The verdict was communicated to Everett on Jan. 14, 1865, the day before his death from pneumonia.

Everett’s name was proposed for Winchester’s second junior high school. Though that did not

happen (the school being named for two Lynch brothers killed in World War II), his presence is recalled in the name of the roadway running by the northern boundary of his former estate, Everett Avenue.

### SAMUEL WALKER MCCALL



Samuel Walker McCall (1851-1923), was probably the most illustrious political figure the town has ever claimed as its own citizen while in office. He did not hail originally from Winchester. Born in East Providence, Pennsylvania, he was the sixth of 11 children of Henry and Mary Ann McCall. The family moving to Illinois two years later, he grew up on a farm next to the open prairie.

McCall completed his secondary education in New Hampshire, staying on to attend Dartmouth, from which he graduated in 1874. He studied law in Worcester, passed the Massachusetts bar in 1875, and began the practice of law in Boston.

While at Dartmouth, McCall had been editor of a student newspaper. While practicing law, he used his evenings to write articles on current affairs for newspaper and magazines.

In 1881, McCall married a Massachusetts woman, Ella Esther Thompson, whom he had met in New Hampshire. They settled in Winchester, living first on Washington Street, and had five children.

By the end of the 1880s, McCall had entered into politics. As a Republican, in 1887, 1889, and 1892 he was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives. He continued doing newspaper work. In fact, with two others, he purchased the *Boston Daily Advertiser* and was editor-in-chief for two years.

McCall first appeared in national politics as a delegate to the national Republican convention in 1888. In 1892 he was nominated for Congress, where he served until 1913. He served on the Committee on Ways and Means (1899-1913), among others. As his biographer Lawrence B. Evans wrote, "His course in Congress was marked by an unusual degree of independence." For example, in response to disapproval expressed about his action on issues growing out of the Spanish-American War, he said at a Republican caucus in Winchester in September 1900, "If you want a man with the backbone of an angleworm, don't send me back to Congress."<sup>2</sup> McCall was returned to Congress nine times by substantial margins, e.g., in 1896 he won 74 percent of the votes.

In 1908 he was offered the presidency of Dartmouth but declined it to stay in politics. Though not an educator, he had opportunities to lecture. A series of lectures delivered at Columbia University was published as *The Business of Congress*. A series at Yale was published as *The Liberty of Citizenship*. He was the author also of biographies of Thaddeus Stevens and Thomas B. Reed, as well as many magazine articles. McCall was also a noted orator who spoke on many

festival or commemorative occasions, including Phi Beta Kappa meetings.

In the midst of his success, as McCall went up in the world, so also he went up in the town—literally—building a home, designed by architect Robert Coit, on Myopia Hill about 1902. It was part of a development he and George Fernald planned on the hill with the assistance of the Olmsted Brothers firm. Still standing, it overlooks the Mystic Lakes from its site on McCall Road.<sup>3</sup>



In 1916, this house became the governor's mansion. In 1913, McCall left the House and ran for the Senate but was defeated. In 1914 he was first nominated for governor, but he lost by a narrow margin. Nominated again in 1915, he won then and in two successive years by landslides. Calvin Coolidge served as his lieutenant governor.

Because of party difficulties, McCall then left state politics. In 1918, he announced his intention to run for the Senate again but withdrew from the race. His final political position came in 1920 when he was named by President Wilson to the U.S. Tariff Commission.

Although his career took McCall away from Winchester a good deal, he did make several public appearances in town, for example, giving a speech in 1890 during the 250th anniversary celebrations, attending the cornerstone ceremony for the new hospital in 1916, and leading a delegation of citizens to save the Church Street elm in 1918.

McCall died at home in November 1923. The entire town went into mourning. Businesses and factories closed at noon; everything in town came to a standstill during the funeral services. McCall's widow moved away and died in 1930.

The junior high school (now a middle school) was named after him in 1961 when a second junior high school (now an elementary school) was built.

## JOHN VOLPE



Gov. John A. Volpe (1908-1994), who lived on Grove Street, Highland Avenue, and Everett Avenue<sup>4</sup> from 1938 through 1968, was a familiar and popular figure in town.

The son of Italian immigrants, as a youth Volpe assisted in his father's plastering business and worked as a construction laborer during his high school and college years. In 1933 he formed his own company, the Volpe Construction Company which built, among other buildings, the Marycliff Academy, later converted into the Ambrose School (*which he is pictured visiting above left*).

In Winchester, Volpe was an active member of the Sons of Italy. He married Jennie Benedetto who had been a student nurse at the Winchester Hospital School of Nursing. During WWII, he served in the Navy.

During the 1950s Volpe entered politics as a Republican. He served as Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Public Works before President Eisenhower appointed him to be the first Federal Highway Administrator.

In 1952, he moved into 10 Everett Ave., built by the Volpe Construction Company.



In the same election that took JFK into the White House (1960), Volpe got about 80% of the local vote. This was a significant step for Yankee Winchester which did not elect an Italian to the Board

of Selectmen until 1950. Townspeople greeted his return with a 100-car motorcade and with the applause of hundreds on the Common who gathered to hear his address. Although he lost the election in 1962, he returned to the governor's office in 1964 and 1966.

Volpe returned to national service in 1968 when President Nixon appointed him Secretary of Transportation. In 1973 he became ambassador to Italy. He was active in other areas and earned a Presidential Citizen's Award from President Reagan for his service while chairman of a presidential commission on drunk driving.

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<sup>1</sup> This article © 2019 is a revision of an earlier article by the author, Ellen Knight, published in the *Daily Times Chronicle* on Nov. 5, 2002. This article supersedes all previous articles.

<sup>2</sup> Lawrence B. Evans, *Samuel W. McCall, Governor of Massachusetts*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1916.

<sup>3</sup> The street was known as McCall Road from 1903 to 1939, was changed to Myopia Hill Road during 1939-56, and back to McCall Road in 1957.

<sup>4</sup> 65 Highland Ave., 69 Grove St., and 10 Everett Ave.