

NEWSLETTER:

Tewksbury Historical Society

P.O. Box 522

Tewksbury, MA 01876

# TEWKSBURY GAZETTE

APRIL 2024

T E W K S B U R Y ' S F I R S T N E W S P A P E R

## From Poor Farm to High Tech 'Innovation'

According to Harold Patten's 1964 book, *Ask Now of the Days that are Past, History of Tewksbury*, the Town Farm was purchased from Miss Rebekah Kittredge in 1828. This farm, for the poor and aged of the town, was located on North Street, on the west side, next to what would later become the North Street overpass of Interstate 495.

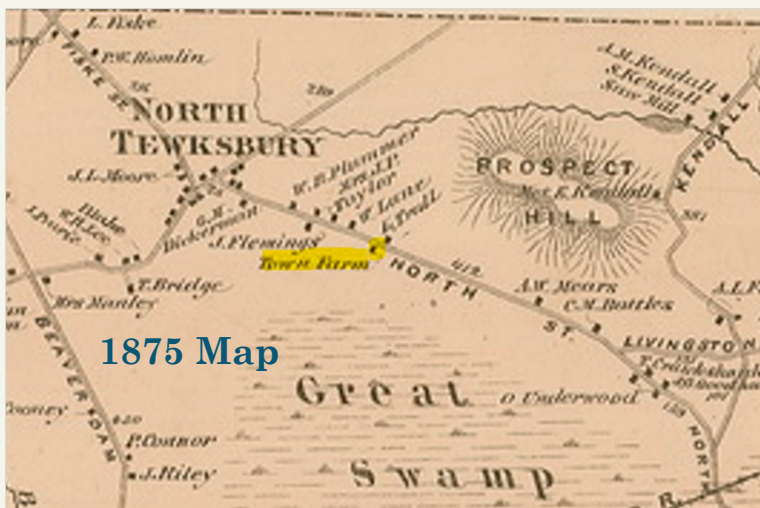


THE TOWN FARM

For almost 100 years, the Farm served the less fortunate of the town in the best way possible in those times. Some were paupers, but the majority were of old age, with no

relatives to care for them. Later, the so-called hoboes who wandered the roads, "could obtain a permit from the Selectmen and they trugged up North Street to the Farm, secured meals and lodging and were sent on their way the next morning," according to Patten.

In 1918, the town sold the Farm due to it being almost vacant.



1875 Map

In 1920, the founder of Wang Laboratories, An Wang was born in Shanghai, China. He immigrated to the United States in 1945 to attend Harvard University for graduate school and earned a PhD in Applied Physics in 1948.

After graduation, Wang invented a key component in magnetic-core memory, a milestone for the development of computers and later founded his own company, Wang Laboratories in 1951.

In 1955, when the patent for the core memory component was issued, Wang sold the patent to IBM for \$500,000. Wang's headquarters was in Cambridge Massachusetts from 1954 until 1964.

In the early 1960's, when Interstate 495 was just at the planning stages, An Wang purchased the 85 acre former Tewksbury Town Farm property for his company, Wang Laboratories.

While headquartered in Tewksbury from 1964 to 1976, Wang Laboratories would develop several vital enhancements to the computer industry. Below are a few highlights.

In 1964, Wang developed the Linasec, which was a special purpose computer that would justify paper tape for use on a Linotype machine.

By 1965, Wang began being well known for its calculators. In January of 1965, they introduced the Wang LOCI-2, which was the first desktop calculator capable of computing logarithms.

In 1971, the Wang 1200 was announced. It was a word processor, where text was stored on a cassette tape. Once the return key on the keyboard was pressed, the line would be saved and could be played back and edited using editing functions on the keyboard. About 20 pages of text could be stored and edited. The document would then be printed on continuous feed paper. This forever revolutionized the way that typing projects would be performed in the workplace.

In 1973, Wang produced its first minicomputer, the Wang 2200, Unlike others, such as the HP 9830, Wang's had a cathode ray tube (CRT) in a cabinet, integrated cassette storage and a keyboard included. The computer used the Wang BASIC program for data processing.



Wang 2200

By 1976, the Wang 1200 WPS (Word Processing System) was a huge success, as was the 1977 Wang OIS (Office Information System). The Wang WPS was the first word processing system to use the cathode ray tube screen to view the keystrokes of the user.



Wang WPS

Wang Laboratories-  
Tewksbury, circa 1970



In 1977, Wang moved its headquarters to Lowell, MA, where they remained until 1993, when the iconic Wang Towers was sold at auction due to bankruptcy.



The Center at Innovation Drive, Tewksbury 2023



Award Winning Sign—United States Sign Council (USSC) Sign Design Competition, 2016

Today, the site of the former Town Farm and Wang Laboratories along North Street, with signage and updated building, is appropriately named, ‘The Center at Innovation Drive.’

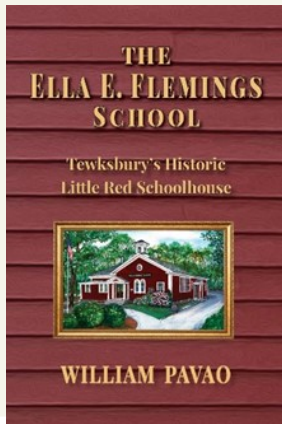
Submitted by:  
Nancy Reed  
VP Tewksbury Historical Society

References and Image Sources:

- Patten, Harold, Ask Now of the Days that are Past, History of Tewksbury, 1964, p. 212  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wang\\_Laboratories](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wang_Laboratories)  
HistoryofInformation.com-Wang Laboratories Introduces the Wang WPS, the First CRT Based Word Processor  
[www.metrosignandawning.com/portfolio/the-center-at-innovation-drive](http://www.metrosignandawning.com/portfolio/the-center-at-innovation-drive)  
Tewksbury Historical Society, Inc.

**Save the Date:**

**Annual Meeting -- Saturday, June 8, 2024, 1:00 PM at Tewksbury Town Hall**



**The Ella E. Flemings School Book:**

**by Bill Pavao**

TO ORDER A COPY OF THIS 400+ PAGE BOOK:

EMAIL: [vpres@tewksburyhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:vpres@tewksburyhistoricalsociety.org)

*Thanks to the author, Bill Pavao,  
the Tewksbury Historical Society  
will receive profits on books that we sell.*

The price for the book is \$20.00. Cash or Check

*Books will be available  
at the Annual Meeting*

*Sat. June 8th*

*1:00 pm*

*Tewksbury Town Hall*

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**Tewksbury Historical Society  
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