



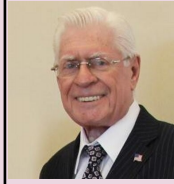
A minister in transition

In bidding an emotional farewell to Oxford United Methodist Church, Pastor Wanda Santos-Perez talks about her journey from the Bronx to New England and the catastrophic event that played a part in summoning her to the pulpit: "My Call Story." **PAGE 3.**

A warm welcome

"Thank you for your informative first issue of The Rambler—very interesting. Good story on the Palladium."

—FRANK CARROLL



[More reader reaction,](#)
[PAGE 8](#)

The Rambler

July 12th, 2017

Worcester, Massachusetts

Mr.
Misguided?

Errors in judgment
are the undoing
of Councilor Gaffney

COVER STORY

Rand Paul on steroids?

By ROD LEE

There may be more than coincidence to Worcester City Councilor Michael Gaffney bearing somewhat of a facial resemblance to a certain junior senator from Kentucky. There, however, the similarities end, much to Mr. Gaffney's detriment.

Whatever cache the man from Beacon St. (he believes in Main South, you see) initially gained by presenting himself as "the people's councilor" has long since been squandered by his bombastic and confrontational personality. A shame, considering that there is merit to his argument—quoting a Democratic giant, JFK (how's that for sticking it in the face of Kennedy-devotees Joe Petty and Ed Augustus?) that tax cuts, not tax gouging, benefit everyone; just as there is in Mr. Paul's contention that his Republican Party's plan to replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is nothing more than "ObamaLite."

The problem is, regardless of how much goodwill Mr. Gaffney feels he is spreading by bouncing from one neighborhood event to another, by beautifying Murray Ave. with his wife Coreen (also a candidate, this year, do we really need **two** Gaffneys as flies in the ointment?), by trumpeting the candidacy of a fellow outsider who probably doesn't even share his political leanings (Bill Coleman) and by heralding the arrival on the scene of "new media" that might be more sympathetic to his cause than Walter Bird Jr. of *Worcester Magazine* (one of a number of journalists with whom he has sparred), there is so often the overriding nastiness—a decided turnoff.

THAT MR. GAFFNEY is full of himself is never more apparent than on his Facebook page, as for instance when he is pontificating during a video segment he calls "Worcester Cheers" in a white Michael Gaffney/City Council T-shirt that shows off his arm and chest muscles while mixing a lemon-drop martini—which he proceeds to sip like a James Bond when his six minute-plus spiel is finished. Here again a listener/viewer can to some extent agree that "the taxpayers are funding tax breaks for big business...if you are a friend of the administration you will get a tax break." Also he makes a solid point in asserting that nonprofits in the city have expanded "104 percent in four years, from \$2.8 billion to \$5.7 billion (more than double!) while taxable property has risen just six percent" over that same period.

The rub comes in the way he says it. And with his propensity

Councilor Michael Gaffney:
Too caustic and controversial
for his own good?



for hurling gratuitous insults. As he did in a recent putdown of Mr. Petty by writing "say it ain't so, Joe (Webster beat us?)" about a report that "Worcester ranked among the worst cities to raise a family in Massachusetts." As if such a stigma is entirely the mayor's fault.

MR. GAFFNEY HAS his fans. Republican State Rep. Kate Campanale from Leicester is apparently a sympathizer (she did not respond to a request to her personal email for comment for this article).

He also has his detractors, like Steve "The Worcester Q" Quist, who minces no words in relating to *The Rambler* his criticism of Mr. Gaffney's politics.

Then there are those, like former Worcester County Sheriff Guy Glodis, who though more reserved in their judgment, are no less dubious of Mr. Gaffney's tactics.

Mr. Glodis, whose The Ballot Box, in Kelley Square, is a newly minted politically-oriented venue, had this to say to *The Rambler*.

"All I can say is I've been active in Worcester politics for over 25 years, property owner, business owner, member of various nonprofits and neighborhood associations and I have never met nor talked to Councilor Gaffney," Mr. Glodis said in an email.

"It's easy identifying and demonizing municipal problems and shortcomings, but it's more rewarding, challenging and fulfilling to actually address and solve those problems. That comment should speak for itself..." Mr. Glodis said, leaving it at that.

"Q" IS more direct.

"Gaffney financially supports the turtle boy sports hate blogs

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FAITH

'God's got this'

Rev. Wanda Santos-Perez is sitting in the parlor of the Oxford United Methodist Church, apologizing that her office is "too messy" for an interview to be conducted there. That is understandable. It is her last week before reassignment to Charlton City UMC and she is packing up.

Her last sermon, entitled "A Father's Provisions," was delivered on June 18th—Father's Day. The implications



Using water from the Jordan River (and struggling to keep her bulletin from the infant's hands), Rev. Santos-Perez baptizes Rebecca Elizabeth Scales, June 18th, 2017.

were obvious even though she didn't mention her dad, Raymond Santos, a former pastor in the Bronx and a now-retired elder of the conference he represented. Nor did she mention by name any of the fathers present that morning including Rene Perez who is the father of their three children: two daughters and a son. Her reference instead, of course, was to the one father who stands

above all; who has been a guiding force in her life since she was fifteen years old.

"Pastor Wanda" was experiencing the same coming-of-age uncertainties about the church at that time that most young people do when, she confides in "My Call Story," her church's "beloved and dynamic youth leader" got married and left. The void that remained was hard to accept. She began to look for reasons not to attend church. That summer, she said, "we

received a call to the parsonage, at about five o'clock in the morning. My cousin, who I was named after, had succeeded in ending her life the night before with her father's work revolver. We were on a plane to Puerto Rico later that day."

THE LOSS OF her cousin, with whom she was close, could have exacerbated Rev. Santos-Perez's misgivings about the importance of church. Her cousin was a gifted student who had just graduated as valedictorian of her class and been accepted into a prestigious military academy. She had lived in New York City prior to moving back to Puerto Rico. The two girls had stayed in touch, exchanging letters. As her cousin approached her senior year, however, "the tone in her letters changed. When she shared with me thoughts of giving up, I made her promise me she would visit a United Methodist Church youth group. I had loved mine and believed that she also would be blessed. We always kept our promises to each other. But our communication via letters had become less frequent before that awful call came through."

During what Rev. Santos-Perez describes as "a beautiful and moving" service, four youth—two boys and two girls—got her attention. They told of how they had failed to welcome her cousin Wanda into their youth group when she visited, instead allowing her to sit in the back. They apologized. Rev. Santos-Perez, angry at them, went outside to get some fresh air. The sky was black and peppered with stars, "tiny and bright." She could hear the waves of the ocean. She tried to calm herself. But she was shouting at God in her mind. She blamed herself for telling her cousin to seek out a UMC youth group.

When the tears stopped, she relates, the faces of kids who had been coming to worship the past few Sundays, "back home," came into focus—"one by one." Four kids, who "I had not gone out of my way to welcome...because they were not in high school, like I was." She had judged them as the four in Puerto Rico had judged her cousin. "I asked God to

"Pastor Wanda was an asset to our church in many ways. She brought a strong faith and knowledge of the Bible. She believes that being a Christian is more than just sitting in your church building. She encouraged us to step out in faith and do things in the community. She is a compassionate pastor and did a great deal of visiting those who were shut in and in hospitals. When a family experienced a loss she spent time with them. To Wanda being a pastor is a lot more than just preaching on Sunday morning. Her sermons were excellent and she spoke to us in a language we could understand. We were blessed to have her with us for five years."

—Sue Stone, lay leader, Oxford UMC



"Pastor Wanda" officiating at Easter Sunday services, 2017.

forgive me and I promised that if God would allow us safe travels back home, I would make sure to welcome those four new kids...I would learn their story and share mine. I would show them Christ's love..."

REV. SANTOS-PEREZ kept her vow, taking the first steps toward the "compassionate pastor" she would become to those she would ultimately serve including grateful parishioners of Oxford United Methodist like Lay Leader Sue Stone, who presented her with a beautiful bracelet on behalf of the congregation as a parting gift on June 18th.

She built relationships with the four young men she had avoided. She no longer sneaked out after worship. She greeted visitors. "In my heart," she said, "I had resolved to never let another Wanda pass by unnoticed and unwelcomed. I wanted to share the love of Christ with anyone and everyone who would let me. Wanda's death birthed in me a desire to reach the broken-hearted, to preach the good news, to incarnate Christ's love. I began the

—GAFFNEY

CONTINUED FROM
PAGE 2

that shame the less fortunate and most vulnerable amongst us, sexualizes children, verbally accosts a female city councilor, attacks people of color and different ethnicities, insults our city and appeals to the lowest common denominator possible,” Mr. Quist said.

“He has (in a live City Council meeting) accused city department heads, city workers and [city] officials of outright corruption without providing one iota of proof. Nor has he ever apologized for such unfounded scurrilous BS.

“When the time came to support our Worcester Police Department and Chief Sargent’s request for a Mounted Unit Gaffney was the only no vote in support of our Police Department.

“He talks down and insults our city and people which is inexcusable for an elected official,” Mr. Quist said.

“Gaffney is nothing more than a Trump-lite basket case, deplorable with all the bluster and twice the bloviation of the Alt-Right conspiracy theorists not grounded in fact or reality.”

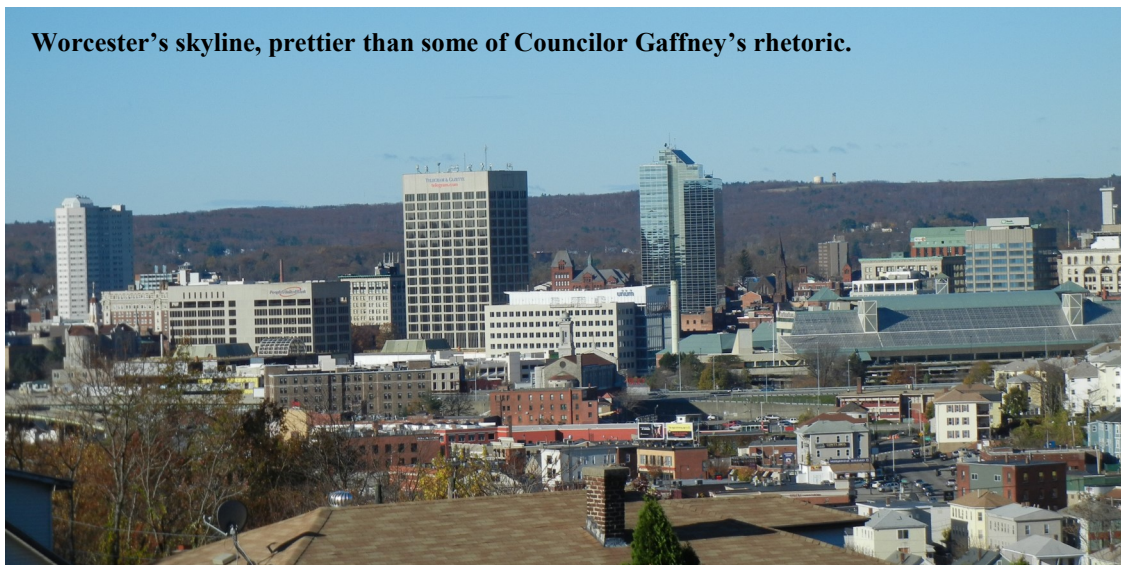
CONTRAST THE style of Mr. Gaffney with that of the AWARE property-tax watchdog group headed by Joan Crowell, which is generally informational in tone except when taking Assessor Bill Ford to task (as AWARE frequently does) for his arbitrary assessment practices.

AWARE’s July 3rd message, for instance, was almost exclusively of an advisory nature. It read:

“When taxpayers view their first quarter tax bill, for FY 2018, they may see a reduction from their previous tax bill that was issued in April, 2017. This is because the previous tax bill was based on the 4th quarter taxes for FY 2017.

“Essentially a twelve-month increase is only shown on the last two payments for the tax year. Therefore, you cannot simply

Worcester’s skyline, prettier than some of Councilor Gaffney’s rhetoric.



take your total tax bill for the year and divide it by four, or take one quarter’s tax bill and multiply it by four.”

The message went on to explain “how to read your tax bill.” Then there was the inevitable note directed at the techniques employed by Mr. Ford:

“For revaluation year FY 2017, the Assessor intentionally and unjustifiably placed bogus valuations on some properties. For example, the Assessor decreased the assessed value of his own property by more than 4%, while some other single-family properties, located within less affluent neighborhoods, saw an increase in assessed value of more than 20%

“Because Real Estate Taxes are one of our largest expenses, every property owner and rent payer should be concerned when discriminatory and unfair assessments are placed on specific properties. Oftentimes the same property owners are hit time and time again with increased assessments, even when there isn’t any valid market data to support and warrant the increases.”

Ms. Crowell concludes, “Every candidate running for City Council should be asked where they stand on this issue”

SANDWICHED between Councilor Kate Toomey and Councilor Gary Rosen’s glowing reviews of Ed Augustus Jr. during the Council’s annual evaluation of the city manager on June 27th was Mr. Gaffney’s portrayal of himself as an Assumption College-educated MBA’er and lawyer who understands finances and who is working hard to counter the manager’s “tax-and-

spend” TIF-driven, nonprofits-tolerant approach to economic development. Relying on a preponderance of nonprofits (alluded to earlier in this article) and big developers who are given tax breaks is an “alarming, unsustainable trend,” Mr. Gaffney said. Are these a sign of a strong economy? he asked. “I say no.” Further, he said, “this Council” is guilty with Mr. Augustus of “spending with reckless abandon” (at the outset of his remarks he made sure to note that “I’m a realist, I look at the numbers, not at anecdotal” data.

One wonders what a Buddy Cianci or Marty Walsh would say to this contention by Mr. Gaffney, that doing what’s necessary to revitalize a long-dormant city is not the kind of open-arms gambit a “professional manager” (as called for in the city Charter) would employ.

Rising to speak after Mr. Gaffney’s rapid-fire eight-minute critique, in which Mr. Gaffney also said the manager “continues to throw money at snow plowing with no improvement in quality,” Mr. Rosen, addressing Mr. Petty, said, “I disagree, Mr. Mayor.” Pointing out that he has known Mr. Augustus since even before his days on the School Committee, Mr. Rosen said of the manager “he’s capable, smart, a good leader, he engages people.” The seventy pages of accomplishments Mr. Augustus submitted “is not fake news. To ignore these is just wrong, a disservice.”

As an FYI, Mr. Rosen said he might have trouble talking “because I had a shot of Novocain at 6:15.”

What Mr. Gaffney needs is a dose of truth serum.

—PASTOR WANDA

Continued from Page 3

candidacy process into the ordained ministry in my senior year of high school. My journey into the ordained ministry has been long. There have been many detours along the way. None that I regret. It's all been a learning process for me.

"To this day, there is no greater joy, for me in ministry, than to witness the moment someone realizes they are loved by God."

REV. SANTOS-PEREZ bears none of the hardness one would expect from a woman who grew up on the rough streets of the Bronx. She is peachy soft in response to all who know her. Her father's influence as someone who "was always doing work with the unfortunate" has obviously been a guiding light in her own approach to the ministry. There was a moment, attending John Jay College and also loving criminal justice, when a different career path beckoned. Instead, after meeting her husband, she moved to Pennsylvania where she and Rene Perez co-pastored a United Methodist Church in Philadelphia for six years.

"He did Spanish and I did English," she said.

They also ministered in Lancaster County for seven years. There, she was responsible for "two services, but they were on-site"—in contrast to the arrangement she undertook upon being appointed to Oxford in 2012. As pastor in Oxford she was also charged with conducting Sunday services at Quinsigamond Village UMC in Worcester, as her successor, Rev. Barry Judd, will be.

"It gets challenging running from one to another," she admitted. At Charlton City, she will officiate one service, at 10:00 a.m.

Her husband is now district superintendent for the United Methodist Church in Central Massachusetts.

HER SERMONS, usually delivered extemporaneously and often wrought with emotion, are one of the legacies that Rev. Santos-Perez will be affectionately remembered for in Oxford.

Steve Gabel, a male voice in the choir and active member for more than twenty-five years, during which time he has seen

"five pastoral changes," said that Pastor Wanda's preaching style is her "most endearing quality. She was always able to share her own life's challenges [with] the congregation. We often think, or at least I did," Mr. Gabel said, "that pastors can somehow stay above or be exempt from the day-to-day issues we all face. Wanda, I believe, helped our congregation enormously by allowing us to see her in those weak moments and then respond as only a truly humble Christian servant could do.

"She will be missed."

"I'VE NEVER BEEN a manuscript preacher," Rev. Santos-Perez said. She does employ "bullet points" to get her message across, but is not averse to leaving the lectern to address the congregation with no notes from the middle of the pulpit. She starts planning her sermon on Tuesday. "By Thursday or Friday I've intensified and I see where God has taken me" with it, she said.

As was the case with the funeral service she conducted for drowning victim Annie Belle Krantz (April 20, 1999-May 27th, 2017), she is not afraid to let her voice crack when overcome by grief—or joy.

"For the most part I speak from the heart," she said. "When I stick to a manuscript I get task-oriented. I like to look into people's eyes."

This honest unveiling of the mood that is prevalent with her at any given moment is an asset.

"I spent too many years trying to bottle that up," she said. "I can feel a connection with the congregation in the pulpit and I am using that to move someone."

IN HER PARTING sermon Rev. Santos-Perez spoke about "Biblical compassion." With her hair up, an open Bible in the palms of her hands, animated gesturing and a strong voice she told of a woman living in a struggling community in California where a boy—nine or ten—was shot. The woman could have surrendered to the temptation to let the incident pass. Instead "she decided to do something



Lifelong Mainer and new Oxford UMC Pastor Barry Judd (with Sue Stone) said that when his father learned he was relocating to Central Massachusetts he told him "I can't believe the bishop is sending you to the Deep South!"

PHOTO/BOB SHEDD

about (the drugs and gangs)," Rev. Santos-Perez said. "She turned her garage into a place for kids to do homework after school. She started with just pens and paper" but with a determination that "I will rise up and do something. I may not change the world but I can change my community."

The video of the woman's inspired action is "out there" and has been viewed "nine or ten years later by thousands," she said. "That is the power of compassion," the ability to effect change "one teacher, one neighbor at a time."

Though departing is sweet sorrow, Rev. Santos-Perez told parishioners "you have a place in my heart forever."

She reminded them, as she does herself, that they needn't be overwhelmed by concerns and worries. In doing so, she used an expression she is particularly fond of.

Do not be afraid; do not be burdened, she said. "God's got this."

The Rambler

Issue No. 2

July 12th, 2017

The Rambler is a literary journal dedicated to commentary and reflections on life in Massachusetts. It is produced at the discretion and whim of Founder, Editor & Publisher Rod Lee. Submissions of up to 1000 words on Arts & Culture, Business, Crime & Punishment, Education, Entertainment, Politics, Sports, Volunteerism and other topics of interest to the general public are welcome.

Contributors receive a small stipend for their efforts.

rodlee.1963@gmail.com

774-232-2999



Bryan Farr, who has a special place in his heart for "Historic U.S. Route 20."

PASSAGEWAYS

Basking in the glow

Millbury relishes status as part of 'Historic U.S. Route 20'

Bryan Farr likes to say that there are "a lot of wow moments" along "Historic U.S. Route 20." He should know. Mr. Farr is founder, president and CEO of the Association formed to promote the road—America's longest at 3,565 miles. Another such wow moment came when Mr. Farr appeared as guest speaker at the annual meeting of the Millbury Historical Society on June 11th at the Asa Waters Mansion. In what Society Vice President Mary Lou Mulhane described as a "fascinating talk and slide-show presentation" to an audience that included "people we hadn't seen before," he opened the eyes of the approximately seventy-five persons in attendance to Route 20's illustrious past.

Mr. Farr's remarks were of particular interest to the Society, since Route 20 passes through the town of Millbury on its path from the Bay State to Oregon.

"He was very passionate," Millbury Historical Society President Frank Gagliardi said. "I thought Route 20 was only across our state!"

On the contrary. It crosses a total of twelve states and has been traveled by many. Mr. Farr, realizing a longtime dream, finally made the "road trip" himself in 2010. Some of the 1800 pictures he took over the course of fourteen days are featured in a "Historic U.S. Route 20" book he published. The book sold out in May. More are being printed. He also has a website, historicus20.org.

MR. FARR IS A University of North Carolina-Asheville grad and a meteorologist by trade who now lives in Chester in Western Massachusetts. He grew up knowing Route 20 as the road that went north from his grandparents' cottage on Cayuga Lake in New York's Finger Lakes region to Darien Lake where his family made a summer pilgrimage. One day in 1997 he took a camera he had borrowed and traversed the northern part of Cayuga Lake. After moving to the Boston area in 2004 and discovering that Route 20 existed here in New England, he decided he had to travel the highway in its entirety.



He is now arguably the most versed authority around on Route 20. During a telephone conversation on June 14th he said he averages "one talk a month" in educating the public about the road in a bid partly inspired by a desire to "create a viable alternative to Route 66" (of television-show fame) as "a magical experience." The number of the road (the "0" in "20" is an indication that the road is a coast-to-coast route) is not what matters, he said. "It could be Route 41." What's important is "things you see on Route 66 you can see on Route 20."

Route 20 roughly parallels I-90. It was laid out in 1926. It originally ended at the eastern entrance to Yellowstone and was extended in 1940. Its terminus in Massachusetts is in Boston at Kenmore Square, where it meets state Route 2. Its western terminus is in Newport, Oregon, at the intersection with U.S. 101, within a mile of the Pacific Ocean.

In Massachusetts, Route 20 is known as "Jacob's Ladder" as it crosses the Berkshires between Lee and Hampden; in Shrewsbury as "Hartford Turnpike;" and in Worcester as "Southwest Cutoff." It passes by Longfellow's Wayside Inn

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

—ROUTE 20

Continued from Page 6

in Sudbury—the oldest continuously operated inn in the country. In 1926, after engineers determined that heavy truck traffic on Boston Post Road was damaging the foundations of the inn, Henry Ford, who owned the property at the time, ordered construction of a Route 20 bypass. This was completed in December of 1928 and sold to the Commonwealth for \$1. Mr. Ford never cashed the check. The project cost him \$288,000. The original Route 20 is now Wayside Inn Road.

Mary Lou Mulhane said that coincidentally, after hearing Mr. Farr talk about how Route 20 was initially “more in the Route 9 area, it was moved and lowered,” and expound on “the road today as it passes through “different areas and different states, here I am at a party a few days later and mention of Route 20 in Goshen, Indiana, came up and a woman said ‘I was in Goshen! I was out there for a graduation at Notre Dame.’”

MR. FARR’S website’s plethora of information about Route 20 includes Gen. Henry Knox’s crucial use of the road in the early days of the Revolutionary War. A Boston bookseller (primarily military history), Knox had witnessed the Boston Massacre. He helped develop fortifications around the city and directed cannon fire at the Battle of Bunker Hill.

In the winter of 1775-76, with the city of Boston blockaded by the King’s Army (Red Coats), Knox told George Washington of a plan to gain cannons and artillery from Ft. Ticonderoga and Crown Point in New York State.

Gen. Washington appointed Knox to head up this expedition. Knox and his entourage carried back over sixty tons of munitions. Knox followed many paths to avoid detection. He entered Massachusetts on January 10th, 1776, in Alford. By January 14th he had reached the path in Russell and continued on what was then Boston Post Road—now Route 20. The original road veered at Palmer to enter Warren, Brookfield, Worcester and Shrewsbury.

On January 22nd Knox entered Northborough. He was befriended there by locals who took him on side paths to keep him safe.

On the 25th he went through Sudbury, Wayland and Weston. On the 26th, Waltham and Watertown.

He arrived in Cambridge on January 27th, 1776.

A major military advantage came when the cannons were delivered to Gen. Washington, fortifying Dorchester Heights. On March 17th, the King’s Army vacated Boston.

Knox’s plan is considered one of the greatest actions of the Revolutionary War.

In 1926 (commemorating the 150th anniversary of Knox’s trek), markers were placed along the route and updated in 1975. From December through January 1975-76, a re-enactment of Knox’s expedition was staged along the original route. Today,

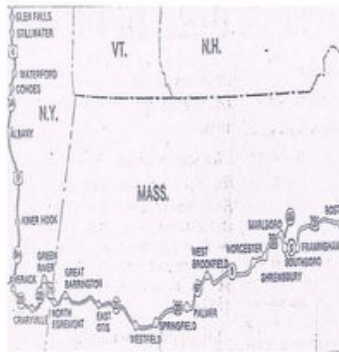
IT HAPPENED ON 20...



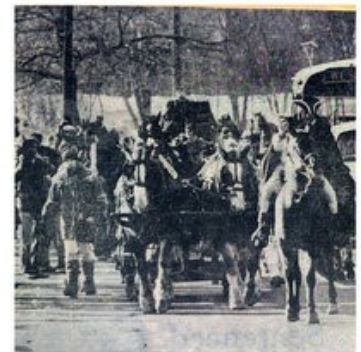
Gen. Henry Knox
(NPS)



Gen. Knox Trail marker today



Map of Gen. Knox Trail



1976 Bicentennial Reenactment

1/15/1976

most towns have a General Knox Trail marker placed in their town square.

SECURING MR. Farr as guest speaker for the Society’s annual meeting was rewarding because “it is always a challenge to find good entertainment,” Mr. Gagliardi said. “Someone mentioned (Mr. Farr’s) name and he was available.”

It would not be surprising to see “Historic Route U.S. 20” placards, which Ms. Mulhane describes as “8-inch by 7-inch shields” and which may be purchased, adorning the front of businesses and homes in Millbury in the near future.



A “20” West sign in Kenmore Square, indicating 3,365 miles to Newport, Oregon, competes for attention with the famous Citgo sign.

VOICES

The inaugural issue: some reader reaction

Meg Mulhern

“Bravo! Your piece on Hank Phillippi Ryan was on-point and I am going to check out her fiction, having not ever known she was a writer! My heart filled with joy while reading your article on Marion Stark and her family, as I am a native Boylstonite! What that family is doing is clearly based on kindness and their drive to help others. I am sure I speak for many when I say ‘welcome back’ to the journalism we all look forward to...”

Maureen Binienda

“Great job once again!”

Fr. John Madden

“Thanks. A most enjoyable read.”

John DiPietro

“Excellent. Fantastic. Wish I could write like you. Need any contributors, or is it a one-man show?”

Paul Lauzon

“As always my friend you are good at what you do.”

Jan Lewis

“Thanks for sending me a copy of the first The Rambler...it’s great. I especially liked the article about ‘Stark Strong’ as I specialize in ghostwriting memoirs for persons who have survived (or who are still coping with) cancer as well as other serious issues...”

Phil Niddrie

“Welcome back. Looking forward to reading this.”

John Monfredo

“Wow, that was lots of work for you...as always, very informative and enriching to read.”

Gary Vecchio

“First of all, I like the name. I think it’s catchy. I enjoyed the articles, and would enjoy seeing more if you feel the desire to pursue this. I want to thank you for having the faith in me to evaluate your new baby. I assume you selected me because you knew I would be honest. My two favorite articles were the ones about Main St. and the Stark family.

Joan Crowell

“Really enjoyed reading your first issue of [The Rambler]. Well done, and the contest is diverse and interesting. Looking forward to reading future publications.”

Bobbie Chase

“Pleased to see you starting something. However, I vote for black print against a white background. If I print this in order to read more easily, colors come out too dark.”

Chris George

“Keep in Ramblin’!...”

