

Then & Now – Famous Citizen

Edward Augustus Goodnow



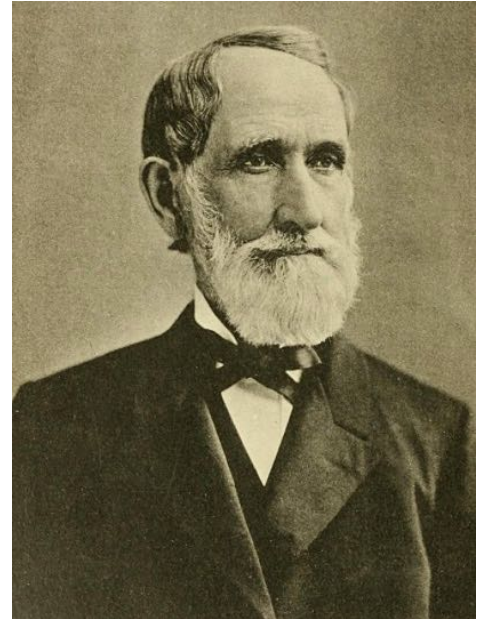
Goodnow Family - 113 Goodnow Rd. 1887

Edward Augustus Goodnow was a distinguished financier with preeminent ability, and widely known as a philanthropist. He was born at 113 Goodnow Rd. in Princeton, July 16, 1810 and was a son of Edward and Rebecca (Beaman) Goodnow. He spent his boyhood life upon the farm, but was fortunate in obtaining more than the ordinary advantages afforded by his Princeton district schools in instruction for several terms at Hadley Academy. At the age of twenty, he was employed by his elder brother Erasmus Darwin Goodnow, who kept a country store located on 44 Hubbardston Rd., and two years later entered into partnership with him. The business was afterwards enlarged to include the manufacture of palm-leaf hats and of shoes, an example of enterprise NOT common at that time in a small town like Princeton.

- A quote from Carl Lapoint, from his paper, *“Some Princeton Businesses-A History”* states, “Charles T. Russell, makes mention of the shoe manufacturing business in his history of 1838, and says that it was recently introduced. Industrial statistics of 1855 show that 300 pairs of boots and 600 pairs of shoes at a total value of \$4000 were produced. This industry employed 16 men and 6 women in that year. By 1865 there was no record of shoes and boots being manufactured in Princeton”.

- A second quote from the Princeton Historical Society, *The Princeton Story 200th Anniversary of the Town of Princeton, Massachusetts*, “Russell’s history makes mention of palm leaf hats” and oral history relates that Phoebe Beaman, who made the first palm straw hat in Princeton most likely sold them in this store.

In 1847, Mr. Goodnow seeking broader opportunities engaged in the cutlery business in Shelburne Falls, MA as a member of the firm of Lamson Goodnow & Co. In 1852, he became a resident of Worcester, and for four years engaged in the retail shoe trade, and in 1856, he opened the first wholesale jobbing house (fabrication) in that city in which the enterprise of his business reached an amount of nearly one-half million dollars in a year. In 1865, he retired from active mercantile life in the possession of a large fortune. In 1866, he became president of the First National Bank, in which office he greatly promoted the prosperity of the institution so that its stock doubled its par (face) value under his management. For years it was the only bank, which allowed interest on deposits subject to check (subject to inspection). He served in this office twenty-eight years. He was instrumental in the erection of the First National Bank building.



Edward Augustus Goodnow

He retained a good degree of Health to an advanced age, and died at his home on Oak Street in Worcester on February 1, 1906, in his ninety-sixth year.

Edward A. Goodnow, a third generation resident of Princeton, Gifts:

1. Mr. Goodnow entered early into the anti-slavery movement, and during the War of the Rebellion (Civil War), he gave freely of his means to sustain the government. He headed a subscription with \$500 to help Governor Andrew enlist and equip the first regiment of colored troops.
2. He subscribed for the first issue of government bonds. He also furnished thirteen clerks from his service for the army. He gave to the Worcester High School the memorial tablets in memory of fifteen students who fell in the war; also a bust of General Grant and a portrait of Harriet Beecher Stowe. Life size portraits of President Garfield and Vice-President Wilson grace Mechanics Hall through his generosity.
3. Several of his benefactions are memorials of his married life.

- a. His first wife was Harriet, daughter of Doctor Henry Bagg of Princeton, and subsequent to her death Mr. Goodnow married her sister, Mary Augusta. Of this marriage one son, Henry Bagg Goodnow, was born, but did not survive infancy.
- b. The second wife died after five years of wedded life. Mr. Goodnow's third wife was Catherine B., daughter of Honorable Seth Caldwell of Barre, who after twenty-five years passed away.
- c. His fourth wife, who survived him, was Sarah A. West.



4. In 1882, he donated \$40,000 to build Princeton a library. The terms of the gift stipulated that the building would serve jointly as library and public school until the library required additional space. Including the library and reading room, the building also contained two sizable schoolrooms with separate entrances for boys and girls in grades 1-12. The school was closed in 1906, and the building was used exclusively for the library. The building served as a library from the time of its completion, as well as a school for twenty-five years or more. The building architecture is Richardsonian Romanesque and was designed by Stephen Earle, of Worcester, in 1882, and construction was completed in 1884. An outstanding architectural feature is the clock tower with words inscribed Goodnow Memorial Building, A.D.1883. Above the inscription is a Howard tower clock, which strikes the hours, on a one thousand pound Meneely bell. The bell is inscribed "Goodnow Memorial Building - Knowledge is Power". Mr. Goodnow also gave an additional money in the sum of \$25,000-\$30,000 to equip the building, with an additional

\$5,000 to go toward the purchase of books and equipment. A large fireproof vault for the preservation of town records was built in the reading room.

5. When Boylston Hall, across Mountain Rd. from the library burned in 1883, Mr. Goodnow offered a matching grant to the town to construct a new town hall on Princeton Common. It was to be located next to the Goodnow Memorial Building and northwest of the Congregational Church. Architect Stephen C. Earle, who designed for the new Goodnow Memorial Building, which had recently been constructed, was commissioned to design the new town hall for Princeton. Goodnow also financed the relocation of the Congregational Church to its present site at a cost of \$5,000. The move was accomplished in 1884, and the new town hall hosted its first town meeting in December of 1885. Goodnow requested that the building be named Bagg Hall in memory of his first two wives (the Bagg sisters) and his son, who all died prematurely. Since December 1885, this building has been used for town meetings, dances, voting, elementary school graduations, celebrations, grange and 4H meetings, and other events. It currently serves as offices for town employees.



1884 Goodnow Memorial Building Dedication

6. In 1887, he gave \$5000 to found the Catherine B. Goodnow fund to the Young Women's Christian Association in Worcester, and later \$25,000 more towards completing the building of this association.
7. He has also been a benefactor of Plymouth Congregational Church in Worcester, of which he was a member, presenting the chime of bells and its fine organ to that Society.
8. Mr. Goodnow donated 4.5 acres to be owned by the town as public-park on the west side of Mountain Road, north of the 11-acre town hall complex, right behind the Town Hall Annex and Police/Fire Station. The gift was accepted by the town on Dec. 24, 1892 along with \$1,000 for future repairs. Both the town hall and the library are buffered by parks: Goodnow Park on the north and Princeton Common on the south.
9. As a friend to higher education he has particularly distinguished himself by making the following donations to:
 - a. Mount Holyoke College he gave \$25,000,
 - b. Iowa College \$15,000 to erect the Goodnow Library and Observatory;
 - c. \$5000 each to Wellesley College, the Moody School at Northfield, and Washburn College in Kansas.
 - d. Oberlin College, Berea College, Lincoln College, and the Hampton Institute
 - e. Huguenot Seminary in Wellington, South Africa for a total of \$25,000 – he was the first American to contribute for the education of woman in South Africa.

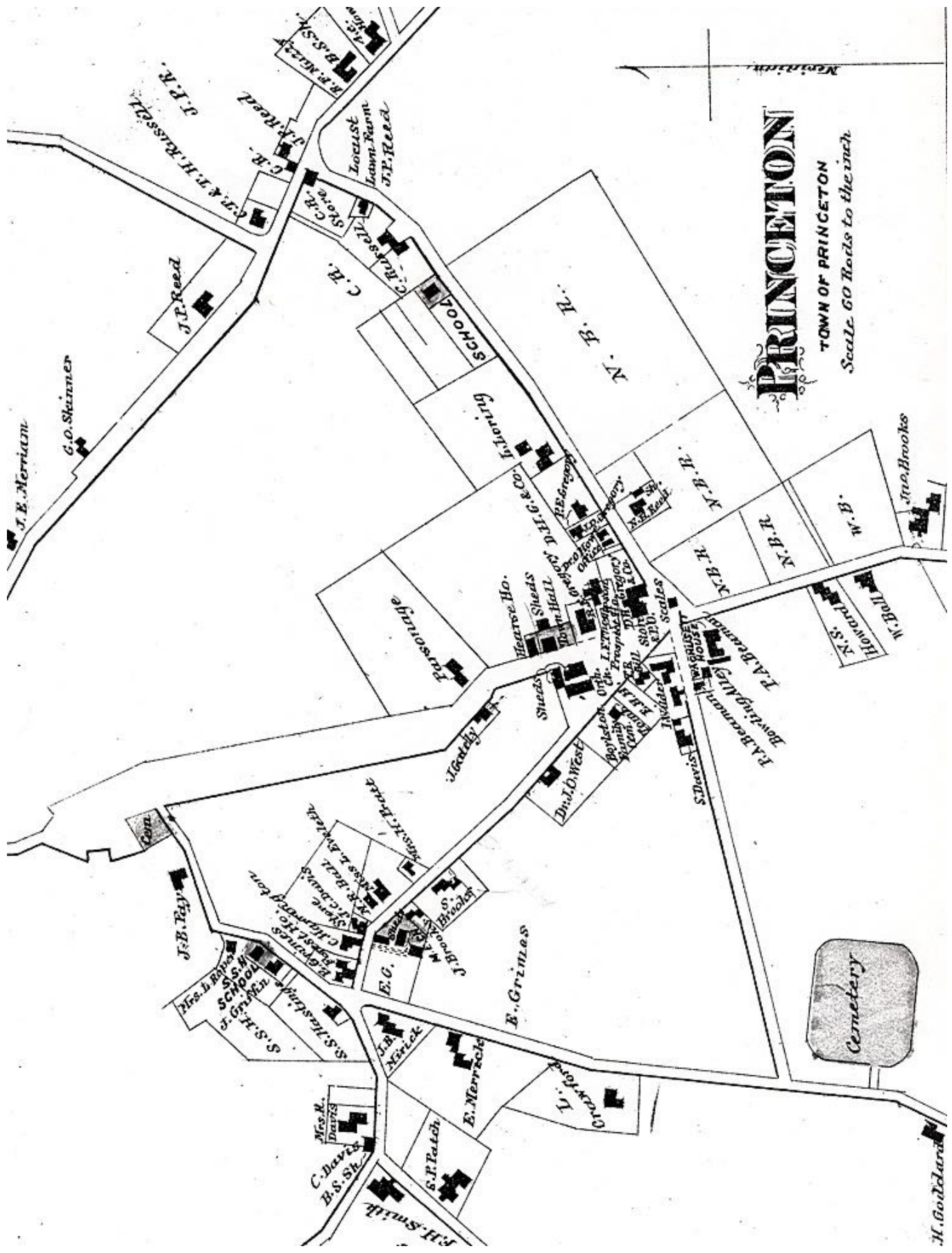
His total gifts for all purposes exceeded a quarter of a million dollars.

Sources:

Blake, Francis Everett. History of the Town of Princeton 1759-1915: Vol. 1 Pages 299-301, Narrative, Princeton, Mass. Town of Princeton, 1915.

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places for PRINCETON CENTER HISTORIC DISTRICT

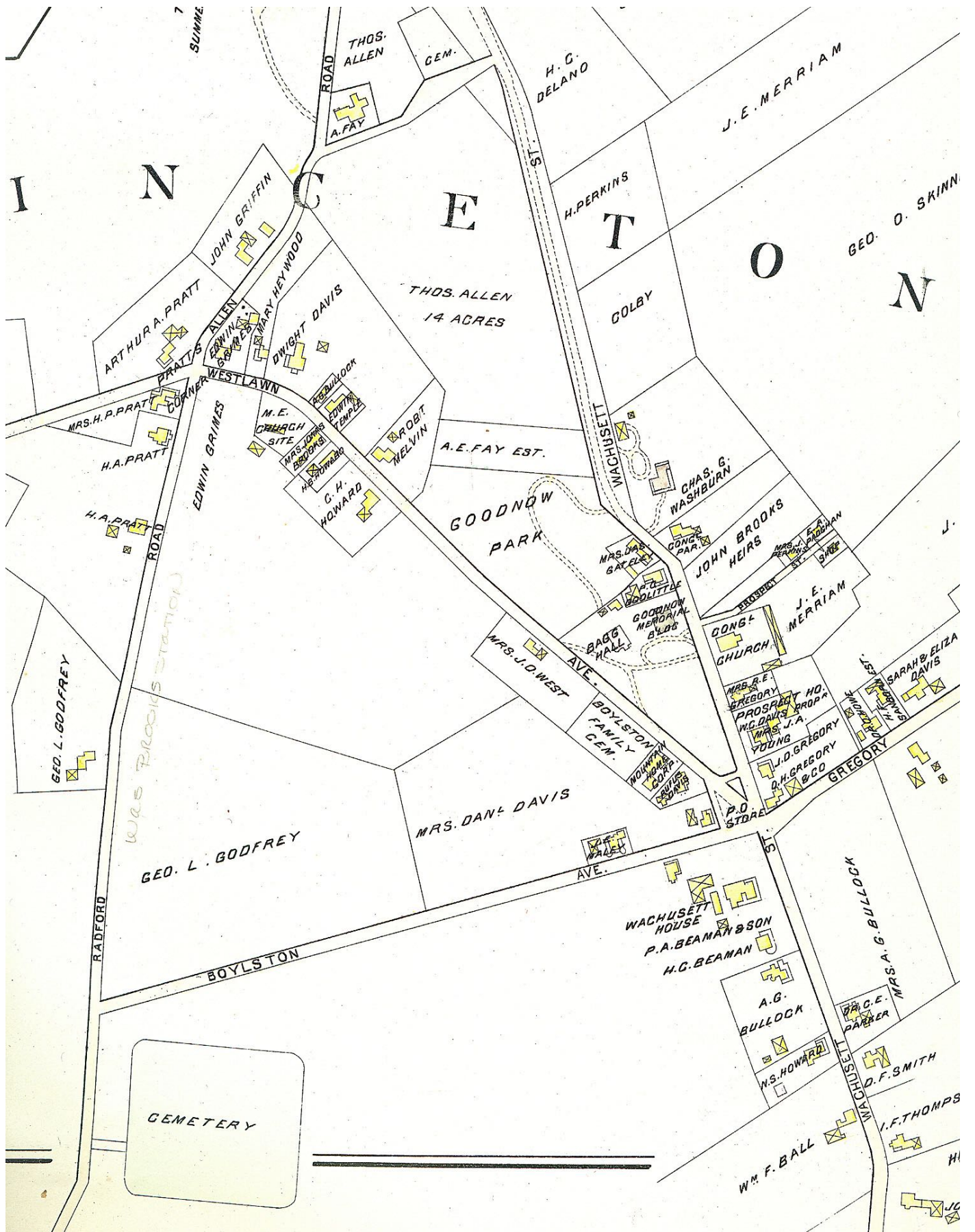
See Maps Below:



PRINCETON

TOWN OF PRINCETON
Scale 60 Rods to the inch

1870 Princeton Center



1898 Princeton Center