



## FOLLETT NURSERY

**H**ome occupation in Weston has long been a staple of our community. Two hundred years ago your neighbor might have been a cobbler, a toll taker, or the local store keeper and postmaster with his living quarters above the store. In 2004 your neighbor might be a lawyer, an accountant, or a massage therapist with living quarters in another part of the home.

One such home occupation was Follett Nursery, nursery stock, landscape gardening, Valley Forge Rd., Weston, proprietor, William Follett. In a "Parish Family Profiles" given to us by William's daughter, Ethel, it was stated that Bill came from England to the United States in 1913 when he was 23, but returned to England when World War I began. He fought in the battle at Loos, and was wounded at Manetz Wood. By 1920 he was back in the U.S. for

good and in 1935 encouraged his love Evelyn to come here as his bride.

Early on Bill worked on the J.B. Duke estate in New Jersey, then on to Round Hill in Greenwich. From 1923 to 1932 he was manager of Henry Wild's Nursery in Norwalk. In 1927, he purchased the house and 20 acres on Valley Forge Road and started his own business there in 1932. Although the property was not in the best of condition, Bill turned the area around the house into a blooming flower and vegetable garden, as well as planting rows and rows of bushes, trees, and perennials on the rest of the property for sale to his neighbors in Weston and surrounding towns. Beginning in 1945, he also lectured during the winter months to garden clubs throughout Connecticut on the subjects of Pruning, Perennials, Vegetable Gardening, and Flowering and Berrying Shrubs.

Mr. Follett and his wife Evelyn worked the land for themselves, having fresh produce during the warm months, then canning or freezing for the winter months. There would be beans, peas, corn, spinach, tomatoes, parsley ("large enough to cover the top of a peach basket"), shallots and onions dried in the attic, melons during the month of August, Chinese cabbage, lettuce, rutabaga, winter beets and carrots, tomatoes, root crops stored in sand in an unheated basement, including parsnips and leeks that stayed in the ground until very late in winter.

In an article published in the Town Crier from Sunday August 9, 1964, Mr. Follett declared that the trick to a beautiful vegetable garden was in planning the whole area before starting. This eliminates unused space. He offered plans for gardeners using his own garden as a guide.

*continued page 3*



The Follett home and Nursery on Valley Forge Road near the corner of Old Redding Road.  
1927



Looking down on the Follett home  
from Old Redding Road

## FOLLETT NURSERY

continued

Folks could order the particular varieties that he recommended, with planting dates, proper spacing rows, whether seed or plants are placed out, good variety names, succession of sowing, and what is very important, locations of similar types of plants. He even made room for cut flowers – they belong too.

Although Evelyn's life in England had been filled with traveling and an impressive knowledge of church architecture, she took happily to her home on Valley Forge, raising two children, cooking, sewing and handling Bill's vast produce from the garden. Despite long hours spent in the garden, Bill was an air-raid warden in World



William Follett tending his corn  
1975

War II, served as treasurer of the PTA, was on the Board of Education, a director of the Weston-Westport Red Cross, chaplain of the Norfield Grange, and Treasurer of the Emmanuel Church where he also served as a Vestryman, and on the Cemetery Committee. He and Evelyn were official greeters and Evelyn was on the Altar Guild and served a long time as Choir Mother to the adult choir.

When Bill was in his eighties, you might think that he slowed down a

TELEPHONE WESTPORT 625

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## HENRY WILD'S NURSERY

W. FOLLETT, Manager

Growers of High Grade Fruit, Shade and Ornamental Trees, Roses, Vines, Etc.  
Landscape Gardeners—Estimates Given  
Evergreens a Specialty

BOSTON POST ROAD BETWEEN NORWALK AND WESTPORT  
NORWALK, CONN.

Oct. 1931.

Estimate of Material and labor for Weston Town Hall  
and Community Green as per plan.

	ft.		
2 Pink Dogwood 5 - 6 @ 8.		16.	
1 Hemlock 5 - 6 x 4 - 5		5.	
6 Juniper pfitzeriana 3 - 4 spd. @ 5.		30.	
1 Norway Spruce 7 - 8		6.	
			57.
231 Flowering & Berrying Shrubs and Vines ( varieties and sizes as per key to plan )		186.	186.
Planting above Trees, Shrubs, and Vines, after the ground has been cleaned ( approximate price )			75.
Digging, Transporting, and Planting items # 1 - 5 incl. 177 Trees and Bushes. ( approximate price )			182.

\$500.00

bit. Not a chance. During the growing season, Bill would have breakfast at 7:30, work in the garden until noon, have lunch and back out to the garden until 5:00. After dinner, he would be found back out in the garden until 9:00. Evelyn took care of all the produce, as well as a magnificent flower garden, and there were large lawns that needed caring for. The vegetable garden measured a mere 100' by 100'. Bill was also teaching

apprentices where, when, and how to plant. His most important advice was "No chemicals, and No Shirking."

This was truly a thriving home occupation which gave great pleasure not only to Bill and Evelyn, but to many families in Weston. Whether it was a question of what plant to put where, the best fertilizer, when to plant seeds, how to get rid of a woodchuck, or any other question about gardening the answer was "Call Mr. Follett and he could come up with a quick-witted and sure-fire cure."

*Ed note:* Our thanks to Ethel Follett for sharing this chapter of Weston's history with us and all the wonderful photos. Ethel lives in a beautiful home in Woodbury, and it was a pleasure getting reacquainted and sharing stories of her father and their beautiful home.



Bill and Evelyn Follett at home - 1952  
on Valley Forge Road