

# Goat swap for flag put Westford on map

## Ivy League antics of Cameron son show up in 1917 Boston newspaper

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**T**is the time the college crowd returns to their campuses and 'tis the time, perhaps, when they begin to think about practicing student pranks on fraternity brothers and sisters, roommates or some obnoxious group down Fraternity Row.

Student escapades are nothing new. Older Westford locals can look back to a specific event when the rowing crews of Harvard and Yale were great competitors. And Westford, even though it was considered by one metropolitan newspaper as a "hitherto obscure country town in Massachusetts," one young man from a prominent family single-handedly brought a lot of pride to his local community three-quarters of a century ago.

It was not often that news of the town nor of its people ever drew a single line in print in the big city press. But on one specific occasion

this affair brought many chuckles to the home town folk.

### In print

One evening Westford readers just burst with pride to read in the *Boston Evening Transcript* that Alexander Abbot (Sandy) Cameron, a popular young person and coxswain of the Harvard freshman rowing crew, had put Yale to shame. Better yet, the story carried a two-column photo of a Harvard 1917 crimson banner flying over the Yale blue, the latter pennant upside down.

Young Sandy, a popular Westford youth and excellent athlete, had entered Harvard in the autumn of 1917. His knowledge of sculling on Forge Pond had made him a likely candidate for the university's freshman crew and the stern post in Harvard's shell.

The news story went like this: Harvard frosh were meeting Yale in New Haven. It had been noted that there had been many raids and counter raids between both crews. The trouble began a week earlier

when the Yale boys learned that the Harvard crew was about to receive a goat for a mascot. They went to the express office near the Yale campus and claimed the animal as their own.

### Even the score

This dastardly act required immediate retaliation. Something must be done to top this theft. Cameron dressed in his Sunday best to invade the Yale campus "to look like a respectable citizen in street clothes" as he strolled toward the Yale flagpole.

He attracted no one. It took him but a few moments to lower and unbuckle the Yale emblem from its halyard... and off went Sandy to the river. In the meantime, two managers of the Harvard crew were in a small power boat, another in a canoe, ready to "rescue" Cameron if need be.

But a rush of Yale men in two fast power boats started in pursuit and Cameron and his buddies, seeing that an escape by water was impossible, returned to land.

"In some way, which Cameron himself could not explain, he dashed by a group of Yale men and soon was safe in the arms of a con-

tingent of Harvard men. It is said that he ran as if he were a member of the track team. Now safely protected, Sandy hoisted the Yale bunting over the Yale boathouse, upside down and beneath the Harvard flag.

There was great consternation in the Yale camp to see their beloved banner so mistreated.

Nevertheless, it was a blow to Harvard's prestige to know that possibly at the same time their goat concealed somewhere was chewing on Harvard sweatshirts.

What the results were of the main event of the day, the race, we do not have the record. But as for student pranks, one would say the final score was: Harvard, 1; Yale, 1.

### Became mill official

At the conclusion of his schooling, Cameron returned to Westford where a position was open for him at the Abbot Worsted Mills. His father, Julian A. Cameron, was one of the mill's top officials. Sandy, too, later became an official of the complex.

Principal product of the Abbot Mills, founded in 1855, was worsted yarns which were sold to other fabricators for additional

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processing. Synthetic yarns coming into use killed the demand for the products for which the Abbot Mills were famous and they were forced to liquidate in 1956. He had been in charge of the large Forge Village plant.

Sandy Cameron observed his 95th birthday on Aug. 5 at the home of his son, Brayley Cameron, in Barrington, Rhode Island. He winters in Florida but still visits old friends in this area in the summers.

*Gordon Seavey recalls that when this story broke, all of Sandy's pals considered him the best — a real hero.*