

The Swan's Island Boston Post Gold Cane



In August 1909, Mr. Edwin A. Grozier, Publisher of the *Boston Post* newspaper, forwarded to the Board of Selectmen in 700 towns (no cities included) in New England a gold-headed ebony cane with the request that it be presented with the compliments of the *Boston Post* to the oldest male citizen of the town, to be used by him as long as he lives (or moves from the town), and at his death handed down to the next oldest citizen of the town. The cane would belong to the town and not the man who received it.

The canes were all made by J.F. Fradley and Co., a New York manufacturer, from ebony shipped in seven-foot lengths from the Congo in Africa. They were cut to cane lengths, seasoned for six months, turned on lathes to the right thickness, coated and polished. They had a 14 carat gold head two inches long, decorated by hand, and a ferruled tip. The head was engraved with the inscription, - "*Presented by the Boston Post to the oldest citizen of (name of town) - to be transmitted*". The Board of Selectmen were to be the trustees of the cane and keep it always in the hands of the oldest citizen.

In 1930, after considerable controversy, eligibility for the cane was opened to women as well.

In 1924, Mr. Grozier died, and the *Boston Post* was taken over by his son Richard, who failed to continue his father's success and eventually died in a mental hospital. At one time the *Boston Post* was considered the nation's leading standard sized newspaper in circulation. Competition from other newspapers, radio and television contributed to the *Post's* decline and it went out of business in 1957.

At this time, we do not have a complete record of those who have held the cane on Swan's Island. A few of those qualified to hold it are:

Howard Staples	-1967
Minnie Parker	1967-1968
Maud Bridges	1968-1976
Raymond Stinson	1976-1976
Lilla Moulden	1976-1984
Helen Stanley	1984-1985
Jennie Staples	1985-1986
Winfield Merrithew	1986-1986
Hazel Staples	1986-1988
Marguerite Orcutt	1988-1990
Ruth Moulden	1990-1991
Olive Heller	1991-1995
Irene Kent	1995-2003
Zulma Higgins	2003-2003
Alberta Buswell	2003-2009

And so it is with pride and pleasure, that on this 4th day of May, 2009, the Selectmen transmit this cane to Swan's Island's oldest citizen, **Stephen McCormick**.

May he hold it for a long time.