

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, April 22, 2013

The Tragedy in Boston: The disastrous bombings near the finish line of the world-renowned Boston Marathon brought back many remembrances. Not only did I live in close proximity during World War II, but my several visits to the Stanley factory and to Fred Marriott's garage in Watertown were less than a mile from the boat in which the 19-year-old brother was captured. The national news does not tell us, but I have deduced that the finish line was on Boylston Street just west of Copley Square, and the backyard boat was across the Charles River from the Stanley sites.

F. E. Stanley loved the Boston Marathon. Quite an athlete in his early years, he and Augusta would ride in one of his cars from their home in Newton to the starting line, somewhere in the vicinity of Framingham. After the runners got started, they would return home for lunch and then drive to the finish line in downtown Boston to watch the contestants come in. After F. E. was killed in 1918, Augusta continued this practice with a driver of her choice as long as she was able.

When a freshman at M.I.T. in 1942, I lived at 329 Commonwealth Avenue, just east of Massachusetts Avenue. An 18-year-old, and especially one who loved geography, soon became familiar with places in downtown Boston and the surrounding area. On the Saturday after Thanksgiving in 1942, the Cocoanut Grove Night Club fire took the lives of more than 600 revelers because the doors were hinged in, and the patrons piled up inside with no means of escape. That location was less than one mile southeast of the finish line for the marathon.

During the fall, winter, and early spring of 1943–44, I lived in the dormitories on the M.I.T. campus as a member of the Army Air Force's Meteorology School. The assassins shot and killed an M.I.T. security guard "near some shops on the campus," which must have been along Massachusetts Avenue on the west side of the main campus, as that is where the shops are.

Most of Watertown is on the north side of the Charles River, and I think Franklin Street passes through this populated area. That is where the noose was tightened, and the culprit was found hiding in a boat in someone's back yard. A small part of Watertown is south of the Charles, and that is where F. O. Stanley built Fred Marriott his garage on Galen Street after the Stanley factory closed in 1924 or 1925. The factory itself, originally consisting of at least 10 buildings, was one block distant, also in Watertown, but since the line with the more prestigious city of Newton was barely three blocks away, the Stanleys called their factory location "Newton" (for both photographic dry plates and for steam cars).

In 1986, I joined three others for a meeting in one of the two factory buildings still standing. I also visited Fred Marriott three times in his garage, the first time with my father in 1938. I liked Boston and have often said that if I had to live in a city, Boston and San Francisco are the only two I would consider. Boston has had its tragedies starting with the Massacre (1770) and most recently the marathon bombings, but it is still a great place to live and to visit.