



A MAP OF Westford town center prior to 1900, when the population was 2,148, shows no lack of open space surrounding the buildings that line Town Common. In the foreground, Pleasant Street (now Hildreth Street) wends its way to the intersection with what now is Boston Road and Lincoln Street at the center of the map. Significantly absent are the J.V. Fletcher Library and the fire/police complex.

(Courtesy Gordon B. Seavey)

240 years on Common ground

By Gordon B. Seavey
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As the world rings in 1988, Westford Town Common enters its 240th year as the focal point of the community. The following is a collection of significant and not so significant bits of historical data about that grassy, shaded triangle that has come to be a source of pride to generations of Westford residents.

The land for the Common was purchased from Joseph Underwood in 1748 for about 20 pounds "or half an acre more or less around the Meeting House" for use as a training field. Today the Common is bounded by Lincoln Street, Boston Road and Main Street, but early maps indicate that Boston Road was called "School Street" and Hildreth Street was known as "Pleasant Street".

The Fletcher Tavern was built in 1713 on the corner of those two streets. A descendant, Grace

Fletcher, was to marry noted lawyer Daniel Webster.

First Parish Church gathered in 1725; the third meeting house was erected in 1792 as an open community church. The steeple rises 120 ft. above the Common.

In 1763, the first bell for the town was purchased and placed in the belfry on the Common.

Almost three decades later, in 1792, Westford Academy was organized. Students met in First Parish Church and private homes. Two years later, the first Academy building was constructed at the head of Town Common.

The building was abandoned in 1897 and in 1910 was moved to its current spot at 2 Boston Road, just south of the Common. For over 50 years it served as the Center fire station, but now has been meticulously refurbished to house the town's first museum.

The original Westford Academy bell, manufactured by Paul Revere

& Sons, was purchased in 1809. It now rests in a place of prominence in the center hallway of the new Academy on Patten Road.

The first double row of trees was planted on the Common in 1847. In 1861, a handhewn flagstaff was erected on the Common with a wooden band stand at its base, paid for by contributions of \$179.98.

A cannon taken during the Spanish-American War was aimed down Main Street in the direction of town hall.

The Union Congregational Church on the corner of Lincoln Street and Boston Road was built in 1829, and remodelled in 1896. It now serves as the First Parish Church Meeting Hall, and is used by civic and social groups from the town.

The town hall was built in 1870 for social as well as town affairs. Here the Civil War memorial plaque recounts the 35 men who died and 172 who served from Westford.

□ COMMON, Page 11