

Families few with ties to town's past

By Gordon B. Seavey

It may be opening a can of worms if I should comment about the scarcity of Westford folk who claim to be related to the Mayflower in some way, but I would like to mention a few old friends who down the line have had their roots in the town for two centuries or more.

The long line of Abbots (note the spelling, one "t") started with John who came from Billerica and joined the First Parish here in 1735 shortly after it was organized. He married—a local gal, Hapnah Richardson. John was a school teacher, town clerk and selectman.

All through the years the Abbots were one of the town's most outstanding families — mill owners, lawyers, philanthropists and such. This family name passed out of town after 2½ centuries with the death of Edward M. Abbot in 1958.

And then there was Amme Spalding, buried in the North Burying Ground (Hillside) in 1770. She was the daughter of Joseph Underwood who sold the land for Westford Common in 1748. That makes Charles S. Kennedy of Old Lowell Road about the sixth grandson.

Barbara Hildreth Parkhurst lives at Hildreth Hills, part of her ancestral home, and claims with pride she is also related to

Fletcher and Keyes (pronounced "Kize") families, who dominate Hodgman's "History of Westford". Her husband is George A. Parkhurst who comes from Chelmsford where that name is prominent in old records. He is a first cousin five times removed of Zaccheus Wright, founder of Westford Academy. Also he is fourth cousin (once removed) of Nettie Marie Stevens, one of the first American women to achieve recognition for her contributions to scientific research. Wright and Stevens are buried in Fairview Cemetery, not far apart.

The Day and Bixby families farmed for generations a large area at the base of Tad-muck Hill toward Graniteville. The Bixby farm is now the Blanchard Farm estates as the Bixby name left Westford long ago. But W. Otis Day, a well-known retired poultry man and one-time dairy farmer, still lives near his ancestral home which he can see across the street. He says he's not keen on genealogy but thinks he's about the fifth or sixth generation of Isaac Day, who came to town from Ipswich after marrying Lucy Dutton in 1796. Otis is a grandfather several times and the families live nearby, so it is apparent that this line will not run out for some time. Otis is now 96 years old. Sturdy Yankees.

I know that there are others, such as Bernice Gould Picking, whose ancestors settled

very early along Route 40 near Keyes Pond and built their home of brick made on the farm; many Wrights, Prescotts, etc., but the space allotted for this story has already been consumed.

Gordon B. Seavey, retired publisher of the Belmont Citizen and a native of Westford, lives on Depot Street.