



THE FISHER FAMILY

seven members of the family of five boys and four girls pictured here (from left to right) are John, Ruth, Clara, Edward, Adaline, Lila and Fred. Tom and Alec were missing when photo was taken.

Fisher leaves bulk of estate for academy scholarships

(Gordon B. Seavey is a retired journalist who often writes on the history of the Westford area.)

By GORDON B. SEAVEY

WESTFORD — The Westford Academy scholarship fund is expected to receive the largest contribution in its nearly 200 years of service to graduates when the estate of the late Frederic Alec Fisher is settled.

A member of an old Westford family, Fisher died last August at his home, leaving the bulk of his estate to the Academy trustees, with instructions in his will to establish a scholarship fund to be known as "The Fisher Family Fund."

Fisher, a strong exponent of proper English grammar, asked that the scholarship be given to a graduate, or graduates, who have "achieved a grade of excellence in the study of the English language."

A 1923 Dartmouth graduate, the donor received his LL.B from the Harvard School of Law in 1926. He was a resident of Portland, Oregon for 16 years, where he was a junior member of a large law firm. Fisher was a member of both the Massachusetts and Oregon bar associations; and for several years, he was in Washington, D.C., affiliated with the U.S. State Department, assigned to Cuba.

Fisher returned to Westford as a permanent resident in 1949, making his home at 14 Depot Street. He became the town accountant and clerk for the board of selectmen. He was also a World War II veteran.

Through the scholarship grant, Fisher's intention was to memorialize his family, starting with his grandparents: Alvan, who was a wholesale cattle dealer and farmer, and his wife, Amanda (Tower) Fisher. They lived at 3 Depot Street in the old Croft homestead (built prior to 1730) and now known as Running Fox Farm.

There were nine children in the family, and all were graduates of Westford Academy.

John became chief engineer for a Connecticut power company, and father of the donor of the soon-to-be-received scholarship monies.

Frederic became a judge in Lowell District Court, and brother Edward (Pete) was an attorney who served as town clerk and moderator. Thomas was director of the old Lowell Manual Training School, while Alec chose to run the family homestead.

The sisters included Adaline Kittredge Buckshorn; Clara, a law librarian in Lowell; Lila, a teacher; and Ruth, the first principal of the Frost School when it opened in 1908. Ruth later taught in Provincetown. She died in 1978 at the age of 102. Most members of the family spent their summers

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for many years as a group in three cottages at Forge Pond.

Chosen to make the announcement of this generous gift for the trustees was Allister F. MacDougall. MacDougall, who will turn 80 on July 18, has been a trustee for 46 years and past-president and is a long-time friend of the Fisher family.

When the will was probated, the trustees were especially enthused about the gift. With increasing demand on their funds and with little coming into the treasury, until recently, to build up their investments, MacDougall noted that the additional funds were most welcome. He hopes others will consider such memorial gifts in the future.

Former Westford Academy principal William C. Roudenbush revived scholarship gifts in his will in 1967, and in recent years there have been additions in varying amounts, including funds from the defunct Nabnassot Boosters Club, the Seavey Communications Award, and from the Hildreth, Hall and Peterson families.

Fisher's widow, Vernita Bronson Fisher, died four months following his death. The estate provides for 15 percent of the residue to go to her side of the family, the balance to the Academy trustees and eventually to students proficient in English.

Executors of the will are A. Dana Fletcher, treasurer for the Academy trustees, and Atty. Edward L. Monahan of West Chelmsford, a long-time friend of the donor.

The duties of the trustees, since the private academy became a public high school in 1905, are confined mostly to supervising the various funds which have accumulated since the founding of the old academy in 1702 as one of the earliest secondary schools in the country.

Auditor Alan W. Bell reports that these funds, at current market value, total \$477,000. Income from investments was sufficient to provide \$12,000 in scholarships to students graduating this week, plus \$7,900 for special gifts of media and computer equipment to the school for general student use.

A special committee on finances supervises the investment portfolio, which is periodically analyzed by one of the larger national investment houses.

The board of trustees has a membership of not more than 15. In years past, this has consisted of prominent male residents of the area. Recently, the trend has been to tap graduates of the Academy for the post, and now there are three women trustees.