

# Just an old-fashioned shopping spree

By Gordon B. Seavey

## All solid granite

One of the natural wonders of Westford are two giant granite boulders, sitting on top of the ground a short distance north of Long-Sought-For Pond. They are called "House & Barn," with the barn being the larger. We can't tell you how much they weigh, but the barn is 124 feet in circumference, measured four feet from the ground as one measures the circumference of a tree, or breast high.

These boulders are a short distance north of Wyman's Beach or they may be reached from North Hill Road. One needs a ladder to climb to the top of the barn.

## Spare that axe

There are still many huge trees in town, of various species, but the giant elms have long gone.

The most notable elm was that which stood in front of the John Comings homestead (now long gone) at the junction of Lowell Road and Burbeck Way (formerly Vinton Place), near the mill dam at Westford Depot.

It was sort of a combination of three trees as the north trunk was 16 feet, 8 inches in circumference, and the south, 14 feet, 8 inches. The third branch was large, but not in comparison. Total circumference was 25 feet, 8 inches. What a shade tree! Its branches spread 118 feet and its height was 90 feet.

The granite wall which formed part of the barnyard can still be seen today.

A couple of giant trees which can easily be spotted stand on the grounds of the old Abbot estate, now the site of the center post office. They are a horse chestnut and a poplar.

## Shopping around

At the turn of this century, the few local stores in town fur-

nished an abbreviated assortment of groceries and staples like kerosene, nails and tools as well as a few pieces of dry goods and sewing materials.

If one really wanted something big, it was an outing for parents and children to hitch up Nellie to the Democrat wagon or buggy and head for Lowell, eight miles away.

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## Westford Wanderings

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By 1900 the street car line had not been constructed, but the steam trains ran, five round trips a day, from railroad stations at Forge Village, Graniteville, Westford Depot and Brookside. The Lowell station, which was perceived as a marvelous piece of Victorian architecture, is no longer on Middlesex Street, crowded out by massive street intersections of cement and traffic lights.

At the station was a marvelous display of candy goodies, probably the greatest any country youngster had ever seen. Dad didn't have to wait long as he dipped into his leather purse for money to buy tickets back to Westford as there were three ticket windows to serve passengers. There were two afternoon trains from home, both connecting with trains from Boston. The "early" one left at 4:08, the last at 4:50.

If the farm needed a new wagon, or a family carriage (and for the wealthy, a fancy trap), Fay Bros. & Hosford on Central Street was the place to dicker. They had the largest assortment, the lowest prices, they said, but Pop had to be convinced. And J.C. Donovan on Market Street had the harnesses, both for light driving and heavy double teams.

Bartlett and Dow, at 216 Cen-

tral Street, had just the thing for many Westford farmers, berry boxes. Quart sizes for strawberries and pints for raspberries, a much more delicate and crushable fruit. Another hardware of renown was Thompson's, next to the "Old Depot" on Merimack St.

A.G. Pollad & Co. was always a focal point for the country shopper. They advertised a store "planned for the convenience of our customers, a waiting room, toilet room and retiring room." Their handkerchiefs had Hamburg edging, the parasols were of the latest in fashion, and cotton underwear, Mackintoshes and shawls were big sellers.

The Prescott National Bank was always ready to serve Westford people especially as John W.P. Abbot of local fame was a director. They boasted of assets of \$300,000. Some single homes in town today can top that figure. The First National Bank, at 56 Central Street, was the depository of the funds of the town, although their assets only reached \$250,000.

And if Dad needed a new suit, he invariably went to Putnam's at 106 Central Street or Talbot's (across the way). Here he could choose a stylish model, strictly

all wool, of light chevots, black clay worsteds of neat mixed "cassimeres." He invariably chose blue serge as Mother said it was more practical. But how they showed the gravy spots! All were bargains, priced from \$8 to \$25. Does anyone wear Balbriggan underwear today? Very cheap then, 25¢ to \$2.

The 20th Century Shoe Store at 120 Merrimack Street was the place to purchase "nobby new Spring styles in colored footwear" with the promise of a "Fit or no sale!" They also watched over bundles while folk shopped elsewhere — hopefully, not for footwear.

Lull & Hartford was the store where the Academy boys purchased balls, bats and gloves, such as they could afford. Golf, skiing, soccer, etc., had not arrived.

Grandfather would be completely lost in Lowell today. These stores have all gone. A new Lowell has risen on these memories.

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