

Looking back

Zaccheus Wright

By Gordon B. Seavey

Eagle staff

Zaccheus Wright was the prime mover and benefactor in the establishment of Westford Academy in 1792, one of the earliest secondary schools in the country. He was born in Westford in 1738, probably in the house which still stands (now occupied by the Aldrich family) near Chamberlin's Corner. A modern housing development has taken most of the surrounding farm land.

He was a prosperous farmer and a tanner by occupation. He served in the Revolutionary War and was colonel of his regiment. He held about every office in town, was a state representative three times and often a delegate of political conventions. He was also a founder of the town's library system.

His financial contribution amounted to a third of the original subscription needed to finance the start of the Academy.

He was first president of the trustees, a post he held for 16 years.

The trustees now own 856 shares of Standard Oil of Ohio, costing \$721 94 from funds Wright left and immediately invested in the old company. Today they are worth approximately \$39,000. The late Alan Ball, treasurer for many years, reported brokers twice had suggested sale of these securities, the income from which is for scholarship purposes.

Long after Wright's death in 1811, "his name continued to be mentioned with respect as one of the best and most public-spirited men that Westford had produced," wrote historian Edwin R. Hodgman.