

Prescott Tavern In Forge Village Now A Memory

by Gordon B. Seavey

WESTFORD — Luther Prescott would roll over in his grave if he knew that one of Westford's better known landmarks was wiped out in the matter of a few hours.

The venerable Prescott Tavern that stood for nearly two centuries in the heart of Forge

end. The horse was brought alongside and the rider climbed the steps and slipped onto the saddle.

The block eventually found its way to the West Cemetery where it marks the final resting place of Luther Prescott and his family. He died in 1895 and his son, Richie, in 1935.

came and the new owners, Robert Breed and Anthony DiAgostino of Concord, found it useless to repair and remodel. They had purchased it from Philip Murray.

The bulldozer moved in, knocked off one corner then tackled the opposite one. Although sturdily built of huge

timbers, fitted in the common mortise and tenon fashion, modern machinery was too much for the dowdy old tavern. A chimney at the end fell along with part of the roof, but the great central chimney remained firm until the end.

It was all over in a couple of hours. The rest of that day and

the next were needed to clean up the pile of mixed boards, glass, mortar, bricks, and cut granite foundation stones. There was little salvage.

The new owners plan a building of colonial design to blend with the adjacent World War II memorial and the Village firehouse. It will house stores on the ground floor and offices on the second.

Nothing remains of the old Prescott tavern excepting memories — and a huge ash tree which protected for many generations the building from the afternoon sun but stood silent as the bulldozer burst through the walls.



PRESOTT TAVERN in Forge Village demolished in the name of progress. This photo taken shortly before building was flattened

Village became a victim Thursday of old age, changing times and neglect. It was laid flat in the matter of a few hours by a skilled operator behind a giant bucket-dozer.

Luther was probably the last innkeeper at the tavern although his son, Richard "Richie" Prescott and his wife, Henrietta, lived there for a period up through World War I.

But as a tavern, it ceased operation beyond the memory of any person now living and the records are scant. It is known that an earlier tavern was constructed by the descendants of Jonas Prescott. He founded the village in 1676 when he built a dam at the outlet of Forge Pond for water power to grind corn and saw virgin timber.

The original tavern burned at an early date. From the type of construction of the second one, we know that it was probably erected in the early 1800's.

It was strategically located for it was a half-way house between Chelmsford and Groton on the first road ever built through Westford. Laid out by Chelmsford in 1663 (before Westford was established), the road ran a circuitous route. It ran over the north side of Robin's Hill to Heart Pond in South Chelmsford and then to Parkerville. Here it became the present Route 225. It then passed by the old West "Burying Ground" to Forge Village and on up to Groton Ridges. Here it joined the Great Road from Concord which headed north through Groton to southern New Hampshire.

Stopping Place

Like most of the taverns in those days, it was not large but did afford a stopping place for drink and refreshment for the person on horseback and the ox cart drivers. If evening were at hand, a bed for the night for the traveller.

Built around a huge central chimney with several fireplaces, a brick firewall divided the building into two sections. On the second floor, a main room with arched ceiling on the west end ran from front to rear. It was used probably for dancing and assemblies.

The attic was a big open room where the drivers could bed down at little cost. An open staircase ran to the peak to a skylight, installed as a fire escape which doubled as a ventilator in summer.

In front, no doubt, was a "horse mounting block" to ease the way for the horseman to get aboard his animal. This was an oblong chunk of granite about three feet high and two feet thick with three steps on one

Various Goods

Pork, cheese and rye were the chief articles of traffic and these had to be transported by ox-teams, or on horseback. In those days, according to Historian Edwin R. Hodgman, there were no wheeled vehicles save the lumbering ox-cart or wagon.

Half a century ago, the building was remodelled into stores and the Village post office located here. It had a new roof and a paint job within the past five years and was quite attractive with its old tiny twelve-over-twelve windows on the ground floor and nine-over-twelve on the second.

But tenants moved out with changes in the business world and it became empty three years ago. In the past few months, vandals began picking away at it, little by little. It was a horrible mess! Rocks were heaved through almost every pane of glass, doors ripped off and empty bottles and cans thrown everywhere. Two fires had been set.

The day of reckoning finally



OLD TAVERN HORSE mounting block marks grave of Luther Prescott. Avis Day and H. Arnold Wilder make a good background.