

# Trough puts Westford one up on Concord

By Gordon B. Seavey

**A**t a special town meeting in August, 1882, there gathered in the new town hall a group of citizens to act on an important item — i.e., a well (or cistern) in the center of the town.

The water from this well was to care for man and beast, i.e., a watering trough in front of the town hall. Its location, if water was found, was to be near the present pay telephone booth.

Proposals were received for doing the work and the contract was awarded to Dennis McCarthy who, in the end received \$147.32 for his labors. This was a sizeable sum in those days, but remember the excavation was by pick and shovel, with some possible blasting of ledge. The price per foot was \$3.50 for earth work and \$7.50 for removal of the ledge.

It was a lucky spot selected for the new well, as after digging 18 feet, a strong spring was struck. Keep in mind this is about the highest elevation in Westford, excepting for Prospect Hill, 65 feet higher.

The water came in so fast that in order to go down further, hand pumps were used constantly so the men could work.

Feeling it was essential to sink the well to such a depth as would give a permanent supply of water, old records show that McCarthy was allowed extra money by the Selectmen. H. M. Huchins was paid \$41 for working the pumps and George T. Day was allowed \$5 for use of a man and oxen for 1 1/2 days.

George H. Holt supplied the pump (a tin cup was always on a hook nearby), the chestnut planking over the well, etc.

And as for the huge granite block, hauled out to catch the water for the horses, it was removed long ago to the Common, placed near the Veterans' monument and in summer filled with flowers.

It was called a "water trough" because on the farm a long wooden trough was fed from the well so several animals could drink it at one time. This granite masterpiece, probably hand-fashioned, was produced by William Reed from his quarry in Graniteville for \$50. What a bargain!

The date of 1883 is carved in large numerals on the block — and this is why Westford historically has something on old Concord — their watering granite block is dated 1888.

Our watering oasis was a popular spot, being in the geographical center of the town. Travel was mostly either by foot, horseback or horse-drawn vehicles. Horses became familiar with its cool waters and would hurry along the dusty roads to obtain a refreshing drink.

And as for the people, or the kids playing on the Common in the summertime, they always knew where the tin cup was hung.

The digging of the well at the town house must have been the biggest event of that year, i.e., 1893.

The selectmen did authorize to paint the wooden fence around the common, and

three school houses and the work was awarded to George B. Hildreth. His bid was based on 4¢ per square yard but the stock was supplied by Wright & Fletcher. At two schools there was an extra charge of 75¢ each for replacing broken windows. Ed Stevens got \$4.25 for measuring up the work.

The population growth was slow. Town Clerk Joe Heald reported 33 births and 31 deaths. Six former residents were brought back for burial in family plots.

A law suit against the town was settled. The town of Gardner had been supporting Philinda Watson and nine kids for some time, but it was determined that the lady came from Groton, just over the Westford line. The case had been continued over several sessions and one of the selectmen,

□ TROUGH, Page 5