



SPANISH WAR CANNON
... with Civil War ammunition

Westford Center's cannon: Relic that likely never fired a shot

By GORDON B. SEAVEY

WESTFORD — In one of the most prominent spots in town, at the apex of the Common, sits a cannon that probably never fired a shot. It is a relic of the Spanish-American war, bolstered on three corners by pyramids of Civil War cannon balls, far too large to fit the old cannon.

Many a youngster has sat astride the heavy mass of

iron, imagining some day that a blast will roar out of the monster's mouth, to hurtle a cannon ball down Main Street, perhaps as far as Stony Brook!

But when the British made the gun in 1808, it was never intended to shoot cannon balls such as the U.S. Navy used during the Civil War. Instead, it landed at Morro Castle at the entrance of Santiago har-

bor, Cuba. It was captured and taken by the U.S. Navy at the beginning of the Spanish-American war.

THROUGH friendships, the cannon finally found its way to Westford Center. The deal was maneuvered by Sherman D. Fletcher, one of the town's most honored citizens, a selectman and businessman. On a visit to Washington, D.C., in 1899, he paid his respects to

John D. Long of Hingham, then Secretary of the Navy. Long was a past principal of Westford Academy, later a trustee, and former governor of Massachusetts, and the two men were close friends.

A tour through the Navy Yard and the spot where some of the trophies of the Spanish-American war were stored kindled a thought in the Westford man's mind. How about one of these guns as a memorial piece in the home town for the Spanish-American war?

In due time, the gun was set up on a pedestal of Westford granite, with bronze plaques commemorating the war. Unfortunately, in recent years these descriptive plaques were ripped off by vandals and are now lost, perhaps forever.

THE SPANISH-American War was not popular and only two deaths of local servicemen were recorded. They are Alonzo A. Adams and Philip Prescott. The latter, one of the town's most popular and promising young men, died of disease in the Philippines after combat.

And so this mixed memorial stands, a reminder of two wars which upset and wasted so many lives. It is not considered a display of artistic merit, and many would say that it deserves a secluded place, if indeed a place at all, in the beautification of the town.