

Westford settlers made do with what land allowed

By GORDON B. SEAVEY.

WESTFORD — Preserving as much of the local history of two centuries ago as possible, the Westford Bicentennial Committee points out that the early settlers in town found it necessary to "make do" with what nature provided.

Moving westward from early settlements along the Massachusetts seacoast, the early settlers in what was then Chelmsford and now Westford, were mostly from farming families. They chose from vast acreages lying idle a likely spot to settle.

They searched mainly for lowlands and meadows where grass would grow and where there would be a plentiful supply of water for their animals. It was not too easy to find tillable land in Westford as the glacial action of 15,000 years ago left its mark of many boulders, rocks moraines and drumlins.

But in the valleys, such as Stony Brook and along Beaver Brook, they found what they wanted. Morning Glory farm along Lowell Road, operated by the Polley family for many generations, was considered one of the most desirable types of farming property.

The Indians also knew that this was good land for farming, for it is assumed that the corn they grew here in the summer was later ground in an Indian grinding mill nearby. This can be seen today on the hillside opposite the Captain Peletiah Fletcher homestead, now occupied by the Robert H. Treat family.

NOT MUCH TO look at, it is in fact a hole worn in a granite ledge about three feet deep and a foot in diameter. Corn was placed in the hole and then a round rock was stirred by a pole to crush the grain.

Not far from where the first settlers in 1664 built on Frances Hill, where the sizable apple orchards of the Drews, Andersons and Hills are located, is lesser Tadmuch Swamp. In the western part of the town, near the homestead of the town's most noted Revolutionary hero, lies Greater Tadmuch. Here wild cranberries were harvested.

Farmers needed large barns, not only to

shelter their cattle and horses, but to store large amounts of feed (mostly space consuming hay) for the winter months.

Most of these farm buildings have long been destroyed, but a most interesting one has been preserved, not because it is profitable to dairy farm these days, but a Yankee with an eye for business has kept the "dairy flavor" by turning his barn into a lucrative ice cream retail business.

THE OWNER IS John A. Kimball, a graduate of Westford Academy 54 years ago, and a member of a long-time farming family. With son Stanley, their wives and children, they dish out some 3,000 banana splits (their specialty) on a busy day, plus many other goodies.

Long lines often form at newly cut windows in just a portion of the 112-foot red barn. If the customers could see the barn, from the inside out, they would note the old construction of tenon and mortise, where the joints are locked with wooden pegs. The ridgepoles were hand-adzed in triangular form, to adjust to the slope of the roof.