

Westford Wandering

By Gordon B. Seavey

We still like to remind people that the most valuable piece of real estate, in our hearts at least, is Westford Common. The picture-post card gem is less than an acre, triangle in shape, and surrounded by a cluster of attractive historical buildings of several eras, plus a new extension to the Fletcher Library (1895) now under way.

Much more than two centuries ago the town fathers made a deal with Joe Underwood to purchase this land for L5 for $\frac{1}{4}$ of acre, but when June Kennedy was researching for her "Westford Recollections 1729-1979" she noted that the town and the landowner settled for L20 on Dec. 7, 1748. The land size was thus doubled to about $\frac{1}{2}$ an acre.

It took the town fathers a century and a half to note that the transaction had never been properly recorded. This was done on Feb. 2, 1893. During the interim, Minute-men had drilled on the grounds, youngsters from the Academy had used it as their special playground, and the Village Improvement society had planted two rows of native trees (deciduous and evergreen) around the perimeter. Plumb in the center an 80-foot flag pole with a bandstand at its base had been erected.

And who was Joseph Underwood? We think he was a large land owner on the east side of Tad-muck Hill and that the cellar hole of his home might be very close to Leland Street. Look carefully, though, as this cellar hole was a convenient place for farmers later to dump unwanted boulders.

When the shire town of Chelmsford gave up about half of its land to let the residents of our Frances (note proper spelling) Hill and other areas to form the new town of "Wesford" it was the largest community in acreage in Middlesex County. But later to form Lowell, Chelmsford lost many more acres when East Chelmsford became Lowell.

Westford gained another sizeable piece of land when soon after incorporation received from "Groten" a triangular plot, its hypotenuse starting at Forge Pond and ending at Tyng's (Tynsboro) Center. Westford now, with its 30.25 square miles, claims to be the largest sizes community in the county.

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