



This set of buildings on Main Street, which faced the present Central Fire Station, was the shipping point for Westford fruit going to the Boston Market. The house on the right and a large barn in the rear were destroyed by the fire. The stock standing at the lot adjacent to the Fletcher Library, was demolished in 1944. Photo courtesy of Gordon B. Seavey.

Westford was fruit producing center in 1900's

By GORDON B. SEAVEY

WESTFORD Primarily an agricultural town since first settled by Soloman Keyes from Newbury in 1664 on Frances Hill, Westford gradually became noted for its fine fruits at the turn of the century in 1900. Its nearness to markets in Boston and Lowell provided an outlet for its perishable products.

The soil was ideally suited for apples too and many fine orchards were scattered throughout the community. Now there are only a very few fruit growers left, mainly in apples and peaches, who are producing on a large scale.

Berries were a popular item, starting off with strawberries in June, raspberries coming into season around July 4th, and then blackberries following. Other products included plums, cherries, grapes, currants, and peaches.

Growing berries took a lot of hand work and the perishable fruits, particularly raspberries, had to be rushed to market. Some farmers, like the Old Homestead's William Kittredge, teamed their own fruit. Others brought the fruit to a central location from whence individual teamsters were to cart the crates and boxes into the Boston market for a small fee.

The most popular shipping point was from an old store building that stood at the point of the Common in Westford Center. It had a broad piazza all along the front where farmers would bring in their produce in the early evening. The teamsters would then load their wagons, grouping the shipments according to which commission merchant was to handle the sale at Faneuil Hall Market stalls.

Loading was always a social time as farmers, teamsters

and kids gathered at the Common. There were lots of jokes, including the practical ones, joshing and boasting about what the best time any team would make it over the 30 miles of dusty, rutty roads to Boston.

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