



ABBOT HALL, A LANDMARK for nearly a century, is made a mass of rubble within a few hours as giant bulldozer with battering ram extension tears away at the front entrance of the old social gathering place in Forge Village. (G.B. Seavey photo)

Forge Village landmark, Abbot Hall, is razed

By GORDON B. SEAVEY

WESTFORD — Another Forge Village landmark, venerable Abbot Hall which took many months to construct at the turn of the century became a mass of rubble in a single day, March 13.

As a giant bulldozer with a lethal, long steel nose crashed into the sizeable wooden structure, on each passing it brought to old timers the many pleasurable memories which occurred within its walls during its long life.

It was the social gathering place for the mill workers and the villagers. Now it is rubble.

The town's first motion pictures were shown here. The John Edwards Hose Co. #3, under Captain Edward Hunt, held its annual ball in the auditorium. It was the practice hall for the newly organized Abbot Worsted Band.

Here there were socials of various kinds, whist parties, testimonials for returning war veterans and outstanding athletes, St. Patrick's Day parties and minstrel shows. Local churches and groups used the facilities, usually rent free, on many occasions.

Helen Drolet held her wedding reception in the hall. Ex-postmistress Josephine Sorbin Connell recalls that just prior to Christmas, youngsters from the Cameron School would file down the hill to the building for the annual visit with Abbot's Santa Claus.

But the movies, the Rickers, were the big thing. City entertainment was brought to the country.

Jack Abbot, Leader

Treasurer John C. Abbot of the Abbot was the spark plug who had the corner lot remodeled and enlarged to accommodate these events. He also was the organizer of the

Abbot soccer and baseball teams, bowling clubs, the band and the excursions by train for the benefit of the employees.

Jack Abbot (as he liked to be called) was a friend to all. He appointed his right hand man and purchasing agent, Edward F. Hooper, to manage the movies, the company cakewalk and the band. Ed "bought" the films to be shown, bringing them from the distributor's point in Boston.

Two Shows a Week

There was a show in the middle of the week and always one on Saturday night. Each show was a reel of Paramount shorts, but one part of a serial such as "Perils of Pauline" or "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" always came the feature. This was the era of the Clark Sisters and Charlie Chaplin and other Pickford.

While some of the reels were shown in Forge, the other half was held in the other Abbot hall in Greenfield. The picture line for the series of shows was handled by the town's first motion picture distributor.

Mostly accompanying the movie shows were the Rickers, a neighborhood party which was the father of these town dances. They were the first annual at least of the town. The dance was held in the corner lot which was the site of the present town hall. The Rickers were held on the corner lot which was the site of the present town hall.

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