

1904 election debt paid by dashing winner

By Gordon B. Seavey
Eagle correspondent

Elder townspeople gathered in the Museum on Nov. 12 for what is considered Old Timers' Day. Naturally, there were many old stories of early days told and retold.

One that occurred more than a year before I was born has lingered over the years. It concerns town politics.

Principal characters were two prominent folk, Sherman H. Fletcher and Alec Fisher, two unlike persons as chalk and cheese.

Best known was Sherm, who was always addressed properly as Captain Fletcher. He served the town in many capacities and was considered "Mr. Westford." His military title was due to the fact that he was active in the local Spalding Light Cavalry Association, although I don't remember ever seeing him astride a horse. He was a staunch Republican.

And then there was Alec, as loyally a Democrat as there ever was in a decidedly Republican town, where the state and national elections turned out about four Republicans to one Democrat.

But this story is not of party politics, just local stuff.

Westford was getting ready for its annual meeting in the "Town House," according to Town Clerk Edward Fisher. The year was 1904 and Sherm, Oscar Spalding and Esley Hawkes were the Selectmen. Fletcher had already served 12 years and apparently had been well received by the voters.

Alec Fisher was one of the "local boys," well-



liked by his many friends and a stalwart member of Edward M. Abbot Hose Company #1. He was different in this way. All his eight brothers and sisters were successful in their cultural fields: lawyers, a judge, school teachers and a court librarian. Alec chose the life of the area slaughterhouse operator, located on his father's place at the junction of Main and Depot streets.

Alec was a bachelor until late in life. Boys were wary of him if they should appear anywhere near his property on slaughtering day, but if they should show up a day or two later,

he always had a pig's bladder for them. For the uneducated, this was blown up and used as a football, a prized possession in those early days.

It is told that there was a lot of good-natured jestering going on when Alec jumped into the selectman's contest, one which usually drew few if any opponents.

Campaigning was active. Alec (or his managers) vowed if elected he would run in his red flannel underwear from the Common to his home, a sensational act in those days.

The Lowell newspaper reported after the voting that Sherm "had been turned down by a fair-sized majority."

Sherm's boosters reported the defeat with a typical politician's reply: "that he did not desire another term and consequently did not actively seek the position, while the other man had his workers busy from the start."

Politics haven't changed much, perhaps, excepting a dash down Main Street in red flannels.

Gordon Seavey is a Westford native and retired newspaper publisher.