

Sherm Fletcher twists arms of state highwaymen

By Gordon B. Seavey

Any hopes to quickly alleviate the horrendous traffic confusion at Minot's Corner were dashed last month when a state engineering firm told the selectmen it would be at least a year, from now before traffic control signals and widening of the four corners could take place.

As most people now know should they drive to the south part of the town during the morning and evening rush hours, the junction of Boston and Carlisle roads, where they intersect with busy state highway Route 110, shows more action than when an anteater disturbs a termite nest.

This intersection has long borne the name of Minot's Corner for it was here that Captain Jonathan Minot had his little farm, raised a family including three sons and all served with distinction in the Revolutionary War. A few old timers remember the old homestead in sad decay.

Problems of these ancient roads, which were long in use before the town map was published in 1730, are not new.

Ninety years ago the Selectmen petitioned the state to take these roads over as a state highway, to parallel the Great Road which runs from Groton through Littleton through East Acton and beyond. They reported in 1895 that, as usual, "nothing had been done."

They pointed out that the distance from the Corner to the Great Road was a short link and an easier grade which would "give an excellent outlet for heavy teaming for the farmers to get their produce to Boston."

The town's contact man was Sherman Sherm H. Fletcher a loyal town officer if there ever was one, a good businessman,

and as an associate county commissioner had contacts with state departments.

That year he made four trips to Boston "for consultations and hearings before the State Highway Commission." The bill put in for car and train fare was \$1.25 per trip, or a total of \$5. Eventually the roads were taken over by the state but not right away.

With town meeting coming up soon, let's appropriate another \$5 and assign a selectman to the current Minot's Corner problem and perhaps eventually the current problem will be solved.

Sherm Fletcher is kindly remembered by many for his death came in 1928 at the age of 81. A descendant of the town's first settlers, he operated in partnership the Center's leading grocery store founded by his father, and he was selectman for 25 years and postmaster for 20. He chaired the Finance Committee, managed the Westford Water Company and was secretary of the Academy trustees. As a young man he was state representative. As a practical town officer, he had clout! He was captain of Troop F, Spaulding Light Cavalry for 11 years.

Hail Halley's Comet

Outside of a very few people, I believe I was one of the earliest one Saturday morning last month to get a full report on the sighting of Halley's Comet from a very good advantage point in town, Millstone Hill, where MIT has had Haystack Observatory since 1964.

Touted as a very good hour to spot this once-in-a-lifetime celestial event, my wife Barbara had built considerable enthusiasm for taking the first afforded opportunity to spot the phenomenon in the sky which astronomers had been anticipating for years.

My enthusiasm for searching the skies for

old man Halley was about as low as her's was high. The early morning hours promised to be just about ideal, although cold with a high windchill factor.

The alarm went off at 4 a.m., she hurriedly dressed for the predicted cold weather (22°) and was off for the quick drive to the hill, elevation 350 feet. I stayed in bed, snug and warm and just about conked off when the alarm, which had been inadvertently set for "snooze", went off again! So I just stayed awake to get a full report an hour later.

Barbara joined a small group of amateur and professionals, students and a few senior citizens, she being one. Fortunately for her, a science teacher from Endicott College in Beverly helped her spot the comet along the southeastern horizon. To her it showed in her binoculars (bought for the occasion) as a bright, fuzzy small ball of light without the usual "tail", with no motion in the darkened sky.

The group found the choice spot was in front of the once abandoned farmhouse of the Blodgett Brothers, right at the junction marker of three towns: Westford, Tyngsboro and Groton.

And I have a tale about the Blodgetts, which may or may not be true. When the Rural Electrification Program came in many, many years ago, the Blodgetts were able to swap kerosene lamps and lanterns for electric lights. Instead of hand-pumping water from a well to supply the animals as well as the family, an electric pump was installed. The story went that they were so frugal that although the water line passed through the house cellar to the barn, it was not connected to the kitchen sink. The lady of the house still used the kitchen pump!

Gordon Seavey is a Westford native and a frequent contributor to the Eagle.