

## WESTFORD WANDERINGS

- By -

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### *Town Leaders Build The Local Pound*

**WSFD-A** practical custom brought from England by the early colonists was to build a town pound. This is a small, high enclosure built mostly with stones in which to confine animals which may have roamed. Owners of missing animals, unless stolen by horse thieves, could retrieve a straying cow, horse, goat or sheep placed in the enclosure perhaps by a friendly neighbor. All animals were a necessity of life to the settlers.

There seems to be no record in Hodgeman's history of a town pound in Westford. However, a faded record now in the town museum indicates that the selectmen in the winter of 1773 ordered John Abbot, treasurer, to pay money (then in English coinage) to three of the community leaders to construct just what had completed just such a structure. The location was not mentioned.

One item was to pay Jonas Prescott, Esq., one pound, one shilling, three pence (L1-1-3) "For his finding (supplying) materials and his servis as a commiteeman in building the pound." Deacon John Abbot was named chairman of the "Comitee" and was to be paid one pound "Fo his cost and servis in building the new pound." Henry Wright was to receive one pound, eleven shillings and four pence (L1-11-4) for "framing for the new pound."

Another amusing item on the docket: John Robinson, a farmer but better known as a military man, was to be paid one shilling for "Killing a crow in Westford last summer." Crows are famous for pulling up newly planted corn and eating the sprouting seed. A bounty was given for all dead crows.

Here we have a great soldier, a solid citizen and taxpayer, a churchman, and much more, taking a few pennies for killing one sizeable bird which was not good to eat.

But a crow can steal chickens, eat eggs (and most everything else) and is considered a thief. He is wily, canny and smart. Most of all he is villified, pursued and destroyed. Also, the crow knows how to keep out of the range of a gun.

Therefore, it is to the credit of a man who could hunt and shoot the Indians and French in pre-revolutionary skirmishes, and later go on to lead Westford's Minutemen at Concord Bridge and Bunker Hill, to kill a common crow and get paid for doing so.

Thoreau says: "This bird sees the white man come and the Indian withdraw, but it (the crow) withdraws not. Its untamed voice is still heard above the tinkling of the forge. It sees a race pass away but it passes not away. It remains to remind us of aboriginal nature."

Perhaps the killing of that crow in 1773 was not one of John Robinson's greater moments in life.

*[Gordon Seavey as a boy recalls banging away at a crow feeding in a newly-planted cornfield. He learned quickly the range of his brother's shotgun which said crow already knew.]*