

Tuition costs a bargain in 19th century

By **Gordon B. Seavey**
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A faded scrap of paper handwritten in sweeping style, shows that Mary Augusta Reed, then 36 years of age, tutored Abba (Abby) Tower 3½ weeks at 10¢ per week and her sister, Adaline, for three weeks and two days, at the same rate, which came to 34¢. This totalled exactly 59¢.

The Reed family was most prominent in town, in the quarry business among other things. Mary's brother Harrison Reed became the Governor of Florida in 1876.

And another Tower, Miss Helen, probably carried in her little fist \$4 which she gave to Principal John D. Long for her Academy tuition for the term ending July 12, 1857, as a yellowed receipt shows.

Principal Long later became Governor of Massachusetts and later Secretary of the U.S. Navy.

The Tower sisters lived in what is now the last surviving garrison house at 46 Lowell Road in Westford. There is a flat ledge nearby where it was said that squaws kindled their fires and "baked Indian cake in the best style

of Indian cookery," says Hodgman's History of Westford. The rich and rolling fields along Stony Brook made good land for growing corn.

In checking the records, we must be careful to distinguish two families of similar names, but not spelling. Esdras Read came from Wenham around 1654 and Elias via Woburn, both born in England, and were progenitors of these local families. These were large families and contributed much over the years to the social, economic and political life of Westford.

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