

Westford Wanderings: A decade of memories

By Gordon B. Seavey

How soon we forget events of the past. Oscar Wilde wrote a century ago, "Memory is the diary that we all carry about with us." Some folks have good memories, others need to refer to their notes to refresh themselves of the past.

Check your memory for events which occurred only a decade ago — and give yourself a score, perhaps 35 percent correct?

In 1975 Postmaster Bob Connell announced that beginning the first of the year all mail should carry a zip code. This was a new idea to most of us and like many new ideas, there were groans. Just one more thing to do, remembering to insert "01886" on your return address!

Now we "zip" along in stride, adding our particular zip number at the end of our address, knowing full well it speeds the mail and helps clerks to sort the ever-increasing mail loads.

Flagpole vandals

Also, a decade ago, the ancient pine flagpole which floated the Stars and Stripes over the common for 114 years finally fell victim to vandals. It was a heart-breaker, especially to Austin Fletcher,

who has been the volunteer custodian of the flag for much more than a decade.

The wooden two-piece unit was grown on Abijah Fletcher's Cold Spring Farm and later turned by hand (right on the common) by Cyrus Hamlin. Not content to destroy this old and proud landmark, the vandals also stole the heavy bronze tablets which marked the ancient 1812 cannon at the point of the common.

The 80-foot flagpole with a "crow's nest" near the top, was purchased by popular subscription.

Its replacement, a 60-foot fiberglass pole, cost the local taxpayers \$2,000. When the new one was installed ten years ago, there were no great "hurrahs and cheers" as greeted the erection of the original staff — but then again, there were no vandals on the prowl.

Family orchards

Ten years ago Ben Drew and his wife, Sally, decided to sell their 106-acre farm near Chamberlin Corner (on Main Street) after 40 years on the historic place. In operation since early Colonial times, old timers know the place as the Read Farm. The last of the Reads in Westford, Henry B. Read, sold the old homestead and all the extensive orchards (about 80 acres) to a long time friend, George A. Drew, Ben's father.

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