

1852: Town of noteworthy homes

Town Center colorful before advent of zoning

Compiled by June W. Kennedy
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This is the seventh in a series of recollections about Westford by Kate Hamlin (1847- 1937), recorded late in her life from her home in California:

"If I had an airplane in 1847! Or per haps at that date I would hardly have been equal to taking advan tage of it, had there been one.

"I shall call the date about 1852. If the plane were a thousand feet or so above the Common, I could see every house from the center, the hub, to the outermost rim of the village. From the Common, the streets or roads, then as now, extended like the spokes of a wheel north, south, east and west.

"From the west angle of the Common, at the right, [to the present left of the First Parish Church United as one faces the building] stood a large house with a piazza extending the length of its front which faced south. In the house, which had once been one of the many taverns scattered through New England, was a small hall on the second floor, front, extending the length of the house, and in that hall was the first dancing school I attended.

"This house was owned and occupied by David C. Butterfield. The family consisted of father, mother, two daughters and a son. The older daughter's name was Mary; that of the younger, Lydia Anna, called by all of us, Liddanna; the son was Eleazer. Mary had one of the first pianos in the village.

"My memory may be at fault, but I think there was a country store in the orchard, a few rods west of the house, or it may have been in the house itself. I remember distinctly — or think I do — being in the store, standing on a bench along the counter, when a dog that to me seemed as big as a lion (I confess I had never seen a lion) came toward me in a most friendly manner; but I, not recognizing his friendliness, was terribly frightened and screamed for help.

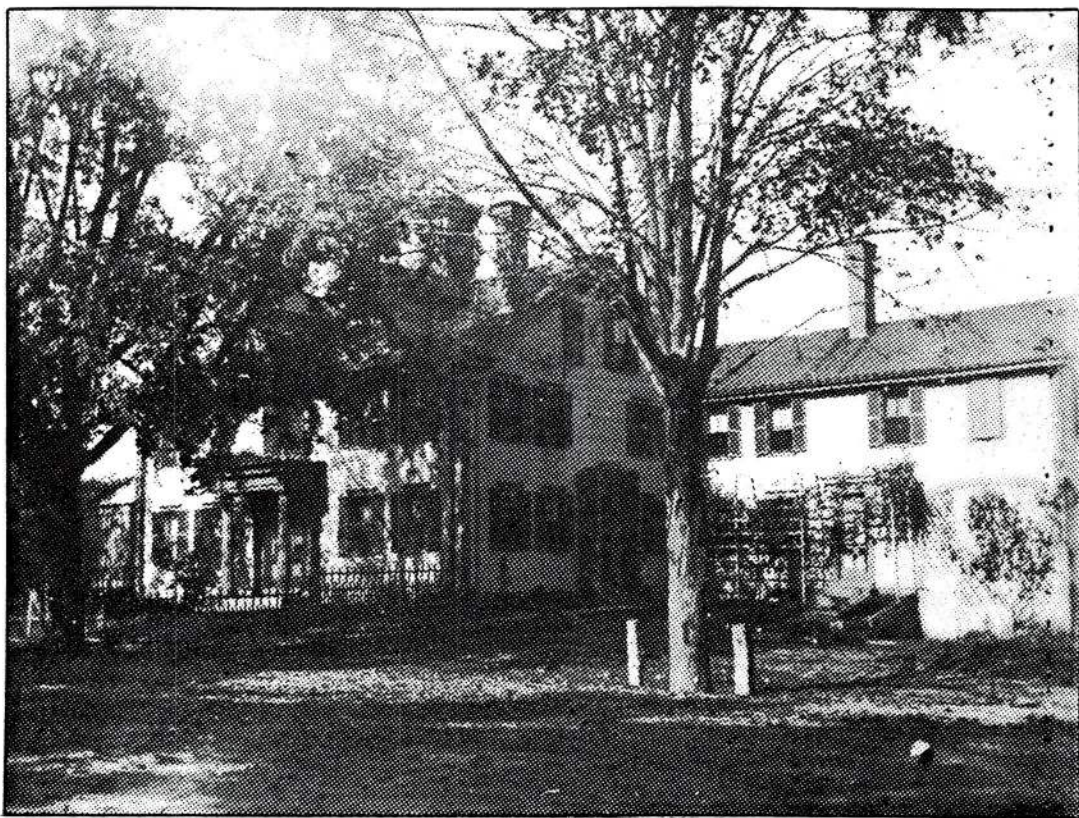
"How I came to the store I have no idea, and but for the fright caused by the dog there would be no impression of the incident left in my mind.

Scene of tragedy

"Beyond the orchard stood a store kept by Samuel Fletcher, father of Mrs. Sherman D. Fletcher. Next to the store, and very near it, was a small yellow house where lived the Herrick family.

"Some years later, one of the few tragedies of the town occurred. One morning, everyone was shocked to hear that Mrs. Herrick, an old lady, had risen in the night and had fallen into the well.

"In front of the Abiel Abbot home, and standing close to the road, was a large, old-fashioned house owned and occupied by the Groce family. The family consisted of Preceptor and Mrs.



Photos courtesy of June Kennedy and Austin Fletcher

Vintage photos show the Abiel Abbot estate (top) which still stands, and Butterfield Tavern, which was to the left of First Parish Meeting House on Town Common.

Groce and one daughter who later married Artemus Cummings. This house stood just where the road branches off toward Graniteville. Then Graniteville was generally called the "Stone Quarry." [This house no longer exists.]

"A few rods along this road brought one to the house of John Osgood. [This house was torn down.] And a stone's throw farther down the hill was the Amos Heywood home [the barn of which has been converted into a home, present occupants being the Robert Ayer family].

Poe a visitor

"Here were two daughters besides the father and mother, and this was one of the most highly cultured families in the village. The elder daughter, Anna, married a Mr. Richmond, was inter-

ested in art and especially in literature and authors.

"On a visit of Edgar Allen Poe to Lowell, as a lecturer or public reader, Mrs. Richmond met him and they became life-long friends. Anyone who has read a recently-published life of Poe will see the name of Anna many times throughout the volume, and this Anna was the daughter of Amos Heywood.

"In reading the book, one will also see mentioned in Poe's letters the name of the sister, Sarah, who, for many years, was well known in Westford."

June Kennedy is a Westford resident and author of "Westford Recollections," a series of historical vignettes and photos.