

Westford Recollections

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A Few Notes Concerning
Parkerville, Westford, Mass.
By M. G. Balch--Additional
Notes by George Wilder
PART TWO

The first Kidder in Westford was Thomas, born 1690. He was the son of George and Lydia Parker. He had considerable wealth and had quite a fine home for those times. He lived on "Texas" Road where a cellar-hole marks the spot near the bend of the road beyond the Coyne place. --(The Kidder home was located near the present Preston Home on Texas Road. Texas or the Lost Nation is another name for this locale in the south part of town on Nashoba Brook. It includes "cat heads" and the old place once owned by James Hapgood, now abandoned to pasturage and forest.) His son, Thomas, was known as Cornet Kidder. He died in 1793. Cornet Kidder's son, James, in 1825, owned the Homer Chandonait farm. --(present Kern home on Coard near entrance to Snow Drive). It was said that the old shop that until recently stood near the road was part of the original home. The Kidders were enterprising people. --(George Wilder recalls that in the early 1920's the house was very old and in need of repairs. The Chandonait family bought it in the late 20's. Being a family of carpenters, they made various changes over the years. The most radical change probably was to add a large ell and cellar way. Originally the entrance to the cellar was via a trap door in east living room. The old place had a very small ell, just the kitchen possibly. In 1923 there stood a very small old building near the road, just large enough for a car. Harry Nesmith recalled it was an old cobbler's shop where at one time shoes were made or pegged. There were in 1923 other sheds strung out in a U shape which the Chandonait's tore down. (The original barn burned in the 1940's when Ken Clough owned the place).

Matthew Griffin of Pepperell married Mary Adams in 1777 and built the first Griffin house, marked by an old cellar hole on the right side of the road near Bear Hill. --(This accounts for the naming of Griffin Rd.). His son, Matthew, married Sally Kidder Adams 1810. Their son, Timonty, married Lydia Gates. Their son, Charles, married Ellen Collins and were Fred Collins Griffin's parents. Fred's great grandmother, when a girl,

lived on the Thifault place, --(located on present Griffin Road across the Rutland home).---and while berrying on the hill, saw a huge bear behind the big rock half way up. She ran home and the men of the village all turned out to hunt for it. They found and shot it, and as far as is known this was the last bear seen in the town. The hill became known as Bear Hill.

There were Proctors living in Parkerville in the early days and a Proctor probably built the Heathcote place --(Emmit homestead). --at least a Proctor lived there. Another Proctor lived on the Jacque place. --(This is the former Walter Chisholm farm now owned by the Mutrie Family). The latter home and the nearby Queenan home in addition to Zwicker and old Burbeck home, I'm told were built by the same carpenter. The similarity with a reversal of ell and barn is noticeable, when brought to one's attention).

In a walled off section of this farm at the junction of Old Lowell and Carlisle Roads two unlettered stones mark graves. --(Actually when this cemetery was restored this spring more than two stones were uncovered). This may have been a holdover of an early pioneer custom of burying the family on its own grant of land.

The name of this family is forgotten and date of burial unknown, but it was before the days of modern surgery, at least. Buried there are a man and his wife and a woman's arm. The injured arm was sawed off on a table in the house now owned by Homer Chandonait --(Kern).

A Leighton built the house now owned by T. Arthur Wilson --(known as the Wilson farm on Carlisle Road).

A Parker built the Alphonse Chandonait house. The barn used to stand west of the house and some distance from it. It was moved and attached to the house ell by Charles Osgood who lived there a number of years.

In 1757 there were four school squadrons in Westford, one being in Parkerville. The children were taught a few months each year by a traveling teacher at the home of Aaron Parker Jr. In 1787 the town voted to build school houses in each squadron. This was, no doubt, the time the brick school house was built --(she refers to the Chorney Home).

The white school house was built in 1880 to replace the one

built a short time before and destroyed by fire. While the new house was being built, school work was carried on in the west room of the Henry Wilder house --(the farm located on the triangular piece of land--marks are visible where the desks were nailed to the floor). When used temporarily as a school, the owner of the home was George Eliot. The teacher at the time was Rebecca Sweetser, who lived with her brother Judson, at the site of the Hagberg home --(Larry Johnston site). Their first home stood near the road, was similar in type to Lester Carter's (Ronald Johnsons). The buildings were destroyed by fire some time in the eighteen nineties and they built upon the hill. Soon after their death, this house and other buildings were destroyed by fire. The new home was built upon the site of L. Johnston home.

Another old Cape Cod style house, similar to Fred Griffins and owed by George Hutchinson, was burned about 1896. It stood opposite the John McIntosh home. The McIntosh place was razed about two years ago and a new home was recently built on the site. Hutchinson's home was located to the west of the James Hudson home.

--(In the very early days of Westford there were two main routes; the Great Road or Route 119 and the Concord Road. When farmers from the first and second tiers of towns in New Hampshire meaning the Hollis, Amherst, Brookline area, and the surrounding Massachusetts towns, brought their wagonloads of produce to Boston, the red brick tavern at Groton Ridges was the dividing point in the journey. Here the report of the road conditions was issued by those who were lodging overnight or merely passing through after a hearty, sustaining meal. Before the days of pavement and snowplows it was the depth of the snowdrifts in winter and the severity of muddy ruts in springtime that were the determining factors in choice of route. Farmers were paid so much after a storm to shovel the tops of the high drifts and have their team of horses or oxen tread the roads till they were pretty well frozen down. Although the roads were open, only about 15-20 miles were covered in a day because of heavy loads and slow, tired beasts. It's no wonder that there were so many taverns along the way.

Rural Free Delivery for the town of Westford began around 1908. Prior to that time mail for the Parkerville residents came from the Post Office of Nashoba which was located at the Carlisle Station or Depot--at the intersection of Route 225 and 27--on the Framingham and Lowell Railroad. Mrs. Jones-Nashoba, Massachusetts--would have been the proper address for the area. There were in all four post offices, designated as Westford, Forge Village, Graniteville and Nashoba. The small house which today stands near the railroad track is part of the original freight station. It was moved across the street from its original location.

When a boy, Harry Nesmith of Parkerville daily hitched his team of horses to a wagon or sled and picked up the milk from the immediate area and took it to the Depot for delivery into Boston. The 8 qt. cans used are almost a collector's item today. Not only did Mr. Nesmith collect the milk, but he also picked up empty cans from the preceding day and the mail which he delivered himself. His arrival must have been the highlight of many villager's day.--an era gone by!

The End

A GLEAM FROM THE PAST Silhouetted against the facade of the town hall is this relic of the past, a wrought iron frame which was once part of a glass enclosure for kerosene lamps which lighted Westford's main streets six decades ago before electricity came to town in 1910. The century old maple which has supported the lamp case all these years is now dying, as are many of the old trees which have lined the streets, and will shortly have to be removed.

Presently owned by the Kern family, this old Homer Chandonait home on Concord Road was the homestead of the man and woman buried at the recently re-dedicated Pioneer Burying Ground in Parker Village.