

## Westford Recollections

by Mrs. Charles S. Kennedy  
 "A Graduate of Westford Academy"  
 as related by Mr. Allister MacDougall

Once again Westford has heard a lot of arguments pro and con, used in the promotion of the erection of a new Academy Building. Similar arguments were presented when the now Roudenbush School was built for the Academy and also, when the present Academy was built. Sometimes it is felt that too much stress is put on brick and mortar and not enough on the value of good teachers and the need for better influence in the house on the attitude of sons and daughters in obtaining a good education.

In the days of the first Academy Building, now the Central Fire Station, there was really only the facilities of one room, with the upper rooms being used as a hall or assembly room. There were no athletic facilities except the open field in front of the Academy now known as the Common. Extra activities as Art or Music were only available when small groups met in the houses for singing schools or mutual exchange of ideas in Art. But in spite of all the handicaps, as compared with what we call

today necessities for an education, many graduates went out and made great names for themselves.

Because Westford has two examples of the generosity and appreciation of one of these graduates to his home town, namely the Civil War Monument next to the Common and the beautiful Memorial Window in the First Parish Church, his story might serve as proof that it takes more than fine equipment, although they are wonderful to have, to assure an opportunity for a successful education.

Col. Edwin D. Metcalf graduated from Westford Academy in 1859. His father, William Metcalf, was the first man to volunteer from Westford when President Lincoln called for volunteers at the outbreak of the Civil War. The boy and his mother were left to carry on their little farm, the first farm on the right going from Minot's Corner on Rte. 110, toward Littleton. From the time he was 13 years of age he also worked part time in a woolen mill. His principal at the academy, John D. Long, took an interest in the boy and a friendship grew between them that lasted all their lives.

From Westford Academy the boy went on to a Business

College, then he began his business career as a clerk in a furniture store in Providence, R. I. After several years of hard work and strict economy he was able to buy his own store in Springfield, mass., and from there on it may be enough to just list some of his accomplishments.

His store became one of the largest in Springfield. He added a store in Chicopee and another in Holyoke. He was elected for two terms in the House of Representatives, then two terms in the Senate, being leader of the Senate his last term. His interests were many. He was appointed assistant Quartermaster General of the State, with the rank of Colonel by Governor Geo D. Robinson. He built railroads about Springfield, formed construction companies, became vice president of the John Hancock National Bank, director of the Merchants National Bank, director of the Mass. Mutual Life Insurance Company and president of the Springfield and new London Railroad.

Next he became interested in business in Auburn New York and in 1890 moved to that city and became one of its leading citizens. He built new buildings and established new industries. He built and established a cordage company that covered twenty acres and was con-

sidered one of the largest in the world, with branch offices and warehouses in Chicago, New York and Boston.

There is enough to show that from a boy graduating from Westford Academy at the age of 16, when the Academy really had only four walls but a fine teacher, he went on to make a great name for himself.

When his father died he came back to Westford for the funeral services and was met at the railroad station by a group of Civil War veterans who escorted him to the church and to his father's grave. Because of this kindness and thoughtfulness, he made up his mind to do something for his home town. The Civil War Monument and the Church Memorial Window are proof of his interest. The pictures of Edwin as a boy at the Academy and of his mother, Nancy Elizabeth Metcalf, were kept down through the years as cherished mementoes by their old neighbors, Mary and Grace Burbeck.

What a thrill Col. Metcalf must have had when he came back to Westford for the dedication of the Civil War Monument in 1910 to find 23 of 172 men who enlisted from Westford, standing to honor his father. The dedication was followed by a dinner under a tent on the common with 500 in attendance.

At the dedication of the Memorial Window the following December over 300 people gathered in the Church for the exercises and to look upon the window representing St. Elizabeth leading a child through the paths of life. Westford has had its gala days and these two in 1910 stand out as among the best. Thanks to a boy from Westford Academy who walked to school, bought his own books, worked hard, had a good teacher and the background of an interested father and mother whose love he cherished to the end.



Nancy Elizabeth Metcalf, mother of Col. Edwin D. Metcalf, who gave the window at the First Parish Church in her memory.



Col. Edwin D. Metcalf as a student at Westford Academy in the 1850's. He gave the Civil War Monument located on the Westford Common.