

At home on Chamberlin Road

By June W. Kennedy

In an interview several years ago, Ruth Johnson recalled her childhood in the family home on Chamberlin Road during the early part of the century:

In 1910, when I was 10, my father bought the Old Heywood place up on the Chamberlin Road. With it came 60 acres. It cost him about \$2,000.

The farmhouse had been remodeled in the 1870s. As was the style of the day, the central chimney and all the fireplaces were removed. The little panes of window glass were replaced by a bay window and larger glass. The original kitchen was pushed back as a summer kitchen. We, of course, had the old wood stove in the house, but Mother moved into the summer kitchen when it got awfully hot. We did have a coal stove in the living room and wood stoves in some of the other rooms which we used in season.

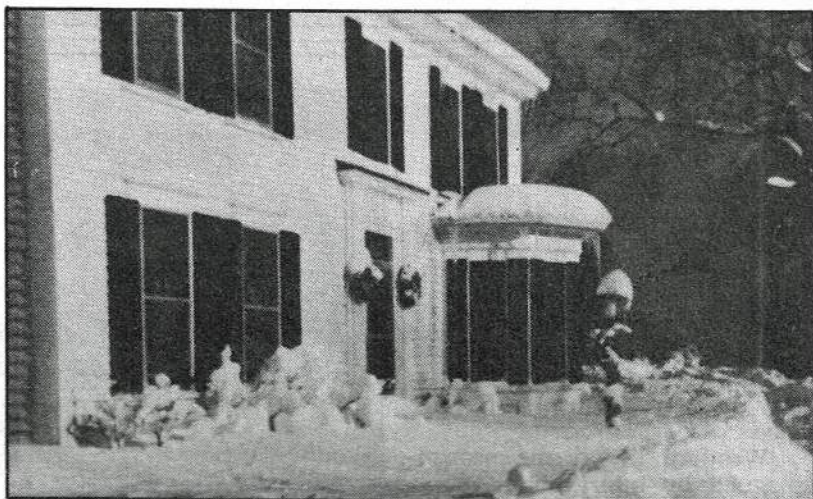
We had no facilities then in the house — our little outhouse was at the end of the walk beyond the woodshed. It was cold out there!

I remember my grandmother drying apples and stringing them for winter use — apple pies and dumplings. She also boiled her sap collected from the buckets of pine hung on the maple trees. That syrup was good!

When Grandma came to live with us, she told Father she would cure the hams from his pigs. He made a simple contraption. It was like a big barrel with a cover on it. What she had to do was stay outside and tend the wood so that it would keep on smoking. Oh, she'd smoke those hams just right! After they were cured, we'd hang them in the attic — the ham and bacon. There are still hooks in my back pantry for hanging things on.

Father, like many men had to be, was a jack of all trades. He kept cows. I remember he built a watering trough for them and also an ice house to keep his own ice. Father added to the orchards here and went into the apple business. Perley Wright would come right to our place and load the wagons with fruit. Then, with his team, he'd head for the Boston markets. My sister, Edna, and I used to put the cards in the apple boxes.

Oh, we didn't lack for something to do even if it wasn't play. Father had asthma so bad that quite often we girls had to milk the cows before heading for



Decked out in holiday wreaths and a blanket of snow, the Old Heywood House on Chamberlin road invokes memories of cooler weather. Still standing, the home was built in the early part of the last century and remodeled in the 1870s. (below) Hats were the fashion of the day as evidenced by a flock of neighbors posing at the homestead during a social gathering.

(Photos courtesy of June Kennedy)



school. Mother made the butter some — not a lot. We had a small table churn that turned. I remember we always set the bread at night. And I mustn't forget the oil lamps. It was my job every Saturday to clean them — a tedious affair!

We were two miles from the center of town — had our own little neighborhood down here. I remember Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting at the Walker family's house. All the folks attended.

In our own big kitchen here we had a lot of good times — Halloween parties, games, cards and square dancing. Ellis Cram and Henry Hildreth played fiddle.

When my children were growing up, we had an iron stove in the kitchen. It was a great clothes dryer! In winter, when

mitten and outfits were soaked from all the coasting and the skating on MacMaster's Pond, we'd hang them on the stove and string a clothesline in front of it to catch the blazing heat. Then when the garments were dried, my children and the neighbors' could go out again. No two sets of clothing then!

During World War II, we all folded bandages and cloth. We did a lot of knitting for the Red Cross, with plenty of time for socializing too — I sure wish I could sample one of Aunt Cindy Prescott's molasses-ginger cookies right now! Yes, we really kept like a neighborhood down here.

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