

catches the flavor of the time:

"May 14, for fixing a wagon, .07; May 16, for a bushel of potatoes, \$1.33; and a half bushel for .12..." — probably small potatoes with the bushel being the first seed potatoes — "July 2, for laying picks, \$1.33; Oct. 8, for mending a pump jack, .17; Oct. 20, for hooping a barrel, .27; and for mending bits, .08..." and finally on "Jan. 5, for mending wagon chains, .92."

Notice that each account always starts with the word "for" — for a knife, for laying a hoe, for fixing a pot lid, etc. This was done on every account in the book. Also notice the odd cents charged, showing how carefully each job was figured, how each cent counted, and how reasonable the charges appear.

At the end of the account for Jacob Osgood was written: "Feb. 8, 1822. This day settled all accounts with Jacob Osgood and nothing due in either side. Ephraim Chamberlin, Jacob Osgood."

Some of the items in the ledger on the page for Isaiah Spaulding are interesting: "Feb. 20, 1821 for an ox, \$1.50; Feb. 27, for 30 nales cut and mending a chaise, .20; May 15, for a dung fork, \$1.50; June 8, for a clasp to a cart spine 6 1/2 ft., .94; July 3, for mending a wagon seat, .20; July 9, for a seating chaise, .75 and for mending a sith snath, .15; Sept. 11, for 40 nales, .20."

Seating a chaise tire means heating the tire where it became loose on the wheel.

In the account of Andrew Fletcher there was credit on "May 10, 1823 for veal 7 1/2 lbs., .30; a charge account for baling a pot on the citle, .33; and for a pot lid, .25; a saw item on April 20, for two bushels of coal, .16."

There were always stone cutters in Westford and Steven Nickels must have been one, as shown by his account: "March 9, 1823, for a drill, 3 lb., .90, and for a hammer \$1.00; April 5, for a chissel (sic), 4 1/2 lb., \$1.25; and for wedges 4 1/2 lb., .85; April 10 for fixing stone, hammer, chissel (sic) and 1 1/2 ft. of wedges, \$2.44."

The various jobs listed almost seemed endless. The entry for Luther Wright: "April 18, 1823 for sharpening gem hammer, .25; Sept. 6, for laying a broad ax, \$1.25; for a butcher knife .17; for old iron credit, .12."

At the price listed for coal, it must have been charcoal made locally in charcoal pits. Under the account of William Chamberlin was a credit: "1821, credit by coal, 122 bu., \$8.59; Jan. 15, 1825, credit by coal, 166 bu., \$14.94, and credit by coal, 79 bussil (sic) at 8 1/2 cts., \$7.1."

The last blacksmith to operate at Chamberlin Corners was Mark Jenkins in the early 1900s. Next to the blacksmith was the wheelwright shop operated by James A. Walkden. He was long remembered for the fine sleighs, wagons and carriages that he made.

In the yard of the blacksmith's shop was the wooden frame for the oxsling — a heavy leather apron placed under the ox and attached to chains and a crank that gradually raised him slightly off his feet.

Different from a horse, an ox cannot stand on three feet while being shod. Also, an ox has a split hoof; therefore, two shoes are nailed to each hoof which prolongs the task. Both the blacksmith and the wheelwright shops had magnetic appeal to the children of yesteryear.

As Longfellow said in that classic poem:

"And children coming home from school
Look in at the open door;
They love to see the flaming forge,
And hear the bellows roar'
And catch the burning sparks that fly
Like chaff from a thrashing-floor."

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

Chamberlin Corner smithy

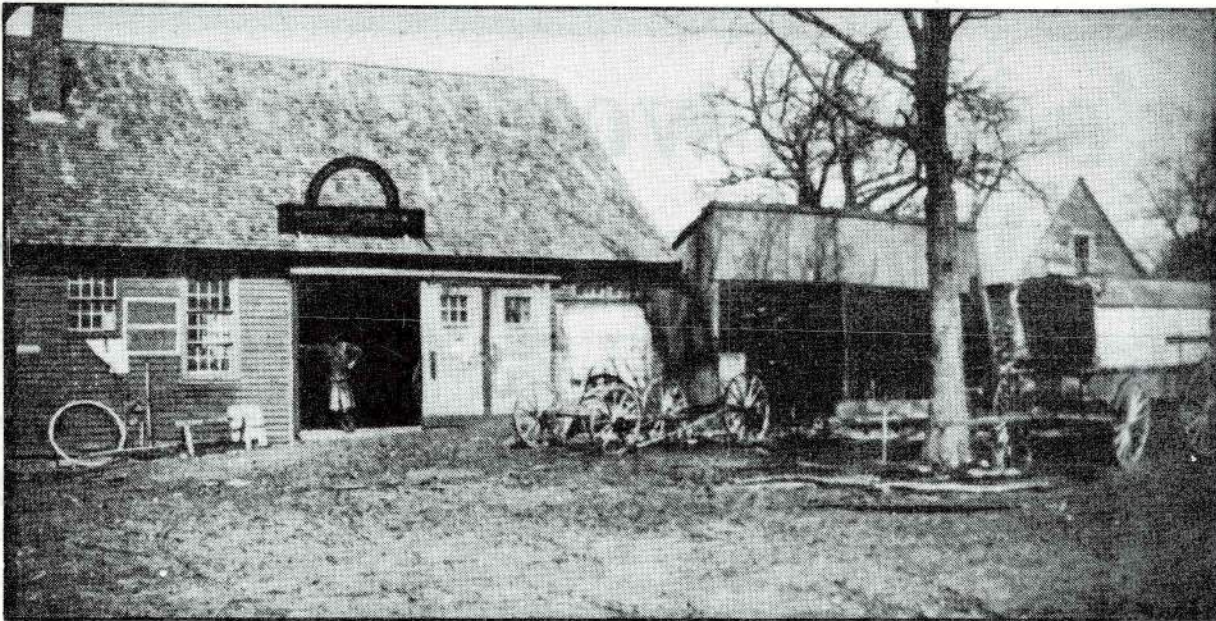


Photo courtesy June Kennedy

An undated photo of the blacksmith shop at Chamberlin's Corner (Main Street and Chamberlin Road) shows a large wagon yard and barn suitable for the sundry tasks that might be undertaken by the "smithy".

In early days, truly indispensable jack of all trades

By June Kennedy

In the early days, the blacksmith was more than a craftsman to shoe horses and oxen. He was a handy man in the community to make and repair farm tools or utensils, create hinges for the doors of the barn and house, even make the nails for constructing buildings or furniture.

Longfellow, in his poem, "The Village Blacksmith", so aptly describes the physique of the local smithy:

"The smith a mighty man is he,
With large and sinewy hands;
And muscles of his brawny arms
Are strong as iron bands."

The old Blacksmith Shop at Chamberlin Corner stood on the northeast corner of Main Street and Chamberlin Road. Entries from an account book of Ephraim Chamberlin, blacksmith from the years 1821 to the 1840s, lead one to believe that except for the iron forges in Forge Village, he was the main blacksmith for Westford.

He seemed to attract both farmers and the townspeople to his versatile shop. Among his customers were many of the leading men in town: Avery Prescott, who built the house on Main Street (Mille Fleurs) now owned by Mrs. Lowell Chapin;

David Butterfield, who ran the tavern located across from the present post office in Westford Center; Albert Leatin, who lived on the present Boston Road; William Hildreth on Hildreth Street; and Nathan Groce, preceptor of the Academy who lived on the corner of Main Street and Graniteville Road.

While the following history predates the turn of the century by many years, it is interesting to note that the Chamberlin Corner blacksmith shop was still operating a hundred years later (1919). Because Westford largely remained a farming community throughout this period, in all probability, the blacksmith continued to supply the self-same needs to the folk here.

The first entry in Ephraim Chamberlin's account was for Nov. 22, 1820. It was an account with Benjamin Osgood for fixing hames. Benjamin Osgood was a neighbor, a Minuteman on April 19, 1775 in Capt. Minot's Company, being 22 years of age at the time.

On the same day that Chamberlin, the blacksmith, fixed the hames, he also shod Osgood's horse for 90 cents and didn't make a charge for fixing the hame.

In case you are so young you do not know what hames are, they are two curved bars that fit

on both sides of the horse's collar and against the shoulders, to which the tugs are fastened to pull the cart or a plow.

The various records on the Osgood page tell a story in themselves of the help rendered by a blacksmith in those days. During the month of December 1820, shoeing a horse was listed five times, showing that Benjamin Osgood operated a large farm with several teams of horses.

On Jan. 6, 1821 is the entry for shoeing oxen .85; Jan. 18, for making a pot lid, .30; April 3, for fixing a pot, .10; April 19, for plating a plow, .65; and again on April 20, for plating another plow, \$1.50.

In those days the plows were hand-made of wood and the plow share was plated with strips of iron to prevent it from wearing.

May 17 was again listed with a charge for shoeing an ox, .61; May 31, for a knife, .12; June 6, for laying a hoe, .40; June 8, for soder (sic) to a wagon, .50; June 12, for shamping a shave, .10; July 3, for mending a grind stone, .30; and July 1, for fixing plow iron, .25.

The next account was for Jacob Osgood, Benjamin's son. Just mentioning the items

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